NINTENDO POWER

Avatar • Tower of Shadow • Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love • Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story • Dementium II
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OCTOBER 2009
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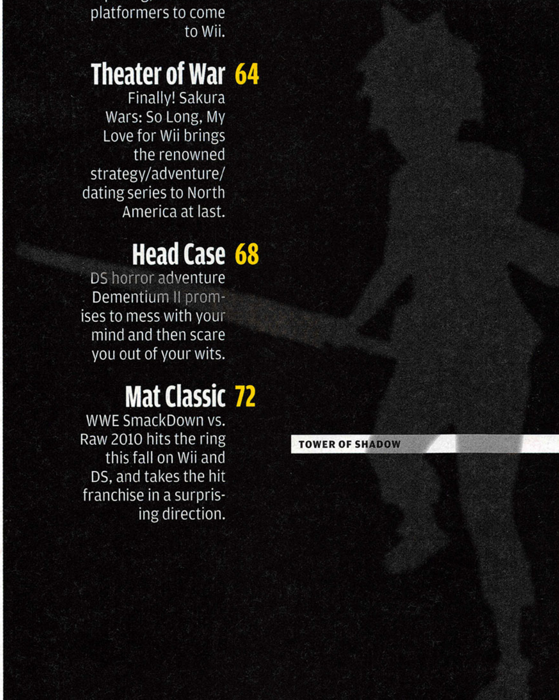

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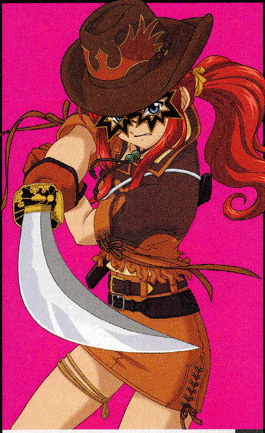

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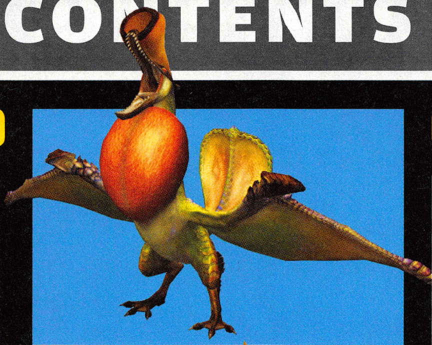

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DS = Nintendo DS
DW = DSiWare
GBC = Game Boy Color
VC = Virtual Console
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWare

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Pulse

New World Order

Chris Slate

Back in the heyday of the "Genesis Does What Nintendon't" 16-bit console war, I never would have dreamed that Nintendo Power would one day hail a Sega console on its cover. As I considered the 20th Anniversary of the Genesis this month, I realized that another, more important division within gaming is also gone: the division of time. Thanks to downloadable game services like Virtual Console, consoles will never again have to die, and good games won't ever fade away. In this new era where players can find and fall in love with a classic Genesis, TurboGrafx16, or Super NES title as easily as a new Wii game— where having the best graphics is no longer the most important quality of a game— developers have more options than ever before to create fun experiences that know no bounds. As someone who loves bleeding-edge technology but will always want new 2-D titles, I couldn't be more excited.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

Wii
The BEATLES! Jam with the Fab Four in the year's biggest music game
WE CELEBRATE 20 YEARS of GAME BOY
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CRYSTAL BEARERS IS THE FULL-FLEDGED Wii EPIC YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!
ALIEN ZOMBIES! Action-horror blasts onto Wii with DEAD SPACE: EXTRACTION
MONKEY SURPRISE Super Monkey Ball adds a big new twist to STEP & ROLL for Wii
Future

V245 SEPTEMBER 2009

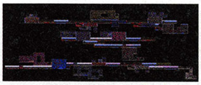
Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters from the back of a flying alien dragon. But first, this month's special letter request: which epic sci-fi or fantasy game world do you find the most compelling? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

WHATEVER YOU NEED

If it isn't too much trouble, could you put a strategic world map of Castlevania II in your next issue? **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

We aim to please:



SAY "CHEESY"

It's been four months since I got my Nintendo DSi, and I love it. I think it would be a great idea if you guys made a place in Nintendo Power were people could send you their DSi photos and see them in the magazine. I would like to be the first to post a photo of myself showing that I love Nintendo; here it is! **—METROID 8472**

Everyone, snap photos with your Nintendo DSi systems, goof 'em up with the photo editor, and email them to the usual Pulse address on page 8. (You'll need an SD card and a card reader to transfer your shots to a computer.) Be creative!

Thank you Nintendo

IT'S WHY WE'RE HERE

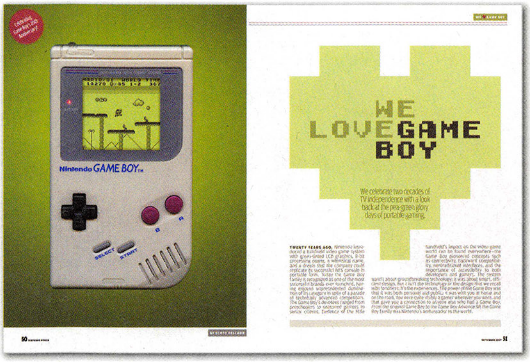
I want to commend your magazine on its great coverage of potential sleeper-hit games. While most mags cover only sure-fire best sellers, Nintendo Power continues to awaken the masses to good-looking, underrated games such as Fragile for Wii and Nostalgia for DS. My library has grown greatly with titles I would have easily overlooked if not for you guys. **—BOPPIN BIBBIT PREZLEY**

I wanted to say thanks for your support of Rhythm Heaven. One of my friends didn't like the game, so I initially decided not to get it. However, I recently changed my mind and bought it because of your review, and now it's one of my favorite DS games! **—IRON NOVA**

PEACH'S SECRET

After seeing the E3 footage for Super Mario Galaxy 2, I said to myself, "I hope they don't have Bowser abduct Princess Peach again." That got me thinking—why does Bowser kidnap Peach, anyway? He never demands a ransom. I think that Peach just gets tired of Mario hanging around her, so she hires Bowser to "kidnap" her so she can get some alone time. This theory also explains how Bowser gets the money to build castles and airships, because I can't picture him dressing up in a suit and tie and going into an office to earn money the legal way. **—TALLARICO**

It was great to read all of the great things you said about the Game Boy; I feel exactly the same way about it. I couldn't help but be a little sad since all of my childhood games were lost, along with my issues of Nintendo Power, in hurricane Katrina. I'd just like to say that you really did an awesome job on the article, and it made me remember all of the fondness I've ever had for Nintendo. **—CONRAD500**


WE LOVE GAME BOY

We celebrate two decades of TV independence with a look back at the pea-green glory days of portable gaming.

GOING WAAAY BACK

Am I the only one wishing for a new Mach Rider game? It *begs* for Wii Wheel support, and when the rider loses a life, it would be cool to see the him blow up and come back together with 3-D graphics! **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

YEAH, YOU WISH

In the Grand Slam Tennis preview in Vol. 242, there was a caption next to John McEnroe that said, "You let your subscription to Nintendo Power expire? You cannot be serious!" I was just wondering if you just printed that in every copy of that issue, or just in mine? **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

Hey, you're the first one to figure that out! Of course, nobody else will ever know, because this response is being put into only your copy of the magazine. But since you know what's up, we'll give you a peek at someone else's personalized version:

Holding Court

> GRAND SLAM TENNIS

Don't forget, Mike—your anniversary is this month and Sarah's had her eye on a Nintendo DSi.

EW! ICK! NO!

In response to Taylor D.'s letter about adding romance to Zelda games, I say this: don't make the Zelda series a chick flick! From this girl's perspective, Link is hot without a voice, Link and Zelda's relationship is sweet as it is, and the series is awesome with its puzzles, story, music, and world. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

You want a show of hands for a Zelda and Link romance? My hand remains down. These characters shouldn't show themselves being all kissy in between taking down Gohma and Ganon, because the ambiguity is half the charm. Like Mario, Link's role is to beat the baddies, save the girl, and save the world.

Fans who support a romance between Zelda and Link don't become any less loyal to the pairing when it isn't blatantly shown in the game. I'd personally be very upset if I saw him kiss Zelda. And what about girls like Malon or Ilia who would never get a chance? Keeping him uninvolved leaves any pairing open with the fans, so keeping Link out of the romantic zone is probably the best thing for him. **—MEGAN**

Well Taylor, I hate to say it, but of the dozen or so emails that responded to your letter, none of them supported your wish to see Link cuddle up with the princess. And then, on a somewhat related note, there was this next one....

LADY LINK

I was on a forum discussing E3 when the subject of Zelda came up. People there thought that Link should be female, but I argued with all my might that Link should stay as I know and love him. What do you guys think? Would feminizing Link ruin the Zelda series or give it new edge? **—ANNABELLE AURION, WIFE OF KRATOS**

I can hear most of our readers groaning at the idea, but you know what? I think it's kind of interesting. Since the Links in the Zelda games are often different people anyway, having the legendary hero reborn as a girl for once could put a fresh spin on things. But would that mean we would also see a Prince Zelda? Hmmm...deal's off.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

Hey, Mr. Hoffman—yeah, I'm talking to you! What's with you hating *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*? That movie is awesome! You have no taste for great flicks. If *Crystal Skull* was a "misadventure," then so are your reviews. Anyways, Hoffman, your job is to review (and preview) video games, not well-received movies. You just got served! **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

The Hoff says: Yes, it's mainly our job to review and preview games, so when we review movies it's like a special bonus. In fact, as a treat, here's my review for the film *Zack and Miri*: As a sequel, I assume, to Capcom's Zack & Wiki for Wii, this movie is very disappointing. Zack looks nothing like he does in the game, and why they replaced the monkey with some chick is beyond me. And I know Capcom wants to age up the property, but the R-rated subject matter is wildly inappropriate for the game's audience.

The perfect use for the Wii console's new pulse-taking technology would be in setting a handicap. The game would check your pulse after beating a level, and if it was excessively high, the next stage would be easier. Conversely, if your pulse was low, the game would get harder. —(NO NAME GIVEN)

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE GAMES USE NINTENDO'S Wii VITALITY SENSOR?

How appropriate that a magazine section called "Pulse" would want ideas for the Wii Vitality Sensor! An obvious use of the sensor would be to maintain your target heart rate during a fitness game. But I think it would also work well alongside the assist function that's being introduced in New Super Mario Bros. Wii. Think about it: the computer could take control of your character in a difficult area based specifically on how stressed out you appear to be. **—DAVID J**

The absolute coolest use for the Wii Vitality Sensor would be to help you sleep. First, you could use it in a kind of Wii health game to train you and calm you. Then, you could download a program to your Wii Remote and take it with you to bed. The Wii Vitality Sensor would monitor your pulse while resting, and, if needed, calm you down with some soothing music from the remote's speaker. A voice could tell you to take deep breaths, or something. When the sensor is able to tell that you are sleeping, it would turn off automatically. **—MIKE M.**

The sensor could be used in a Trauma Center game; the more nervous you get during surgery, the more unsteady your cursor would become. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

The Wii Vitality Sensor could replace the penalty bar in a Wii Ace Attorney game, so players could *really* see how well they could stand the pressure of solving a case in the courtroom. Take too long, and...*guilty*! **—RAPMASTERD2004**

I'm sensing rhythm games in the making for the Wii Vitality Sensor. Songs could match the tempo of your pulse; to get the music to go faster, you'd have to jog or dance to get your heartbeat up. At the end of each song, the game could tell you how well you maintained your target pulse rate. **—FISHERSPOT**

How about a new Lost in Blue title for Wii that uses the Wii Vitality Sensor to judge the characters' vital signs based on the player's own? Add in more vigorous and involved activities and you could have the ultimate survival-simulator game! **—JACOB W.**

I'd like to see a palm reader (er, "Finger Reader"). It could tell your gaming future! **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

Can you imagine the possibilities or pairing the Wii Vitality Sensor with a horror game? The low pulse rate of a veteran player when confronted with hordes of zombies could cause even more of them to spawn, or perhaps even more powerful monsters. For those who are frightened by the sound of a single moaning zombie, their pounding pulse would tell the sensor not to let things get too crazy... and to dial 911 if the beat should stop completely. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

The first thing that comes to mind is using the Wii Vitality Sensor in Silent Hill. You would have to stay calm when surrounded by blind monsters that could sense your fright; if your pulse goes up, they would attack you! Also, a high pulse rate could trigger an in-game adrenaline rush, where you either start moving very fast or maybe enter a slow-motion mode. **—BARON**

Interesting ideas! Developers would have to be crazy not to consider the sensor when making future horror games. *Yikes*!

PLEASE WRITE US

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Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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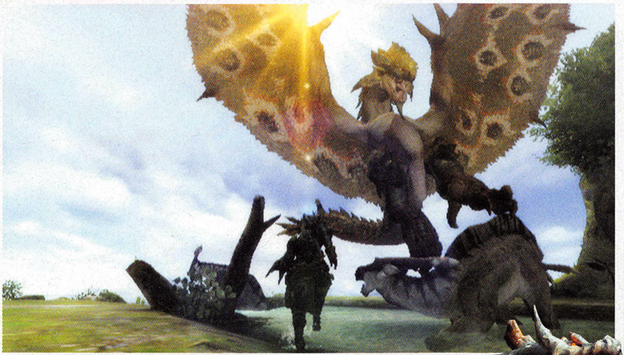
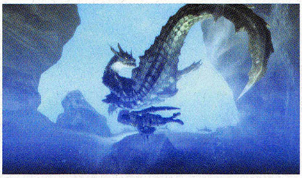
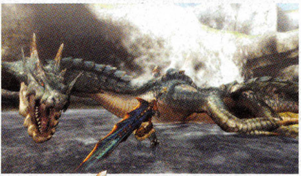


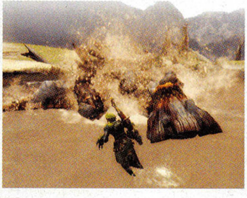


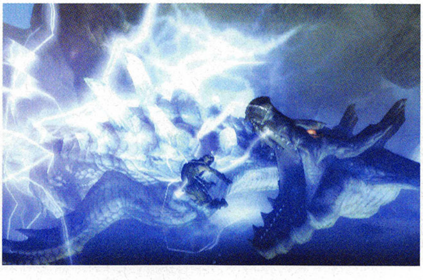


The Hunt Is On

Go online, grab some friends, and bring down beasts. The North American version of **Monster Hunter Tri** lands on Wii next year.

Following multiple unofficial announcements over the last few months, Capcom has finally confirmed that Monster Hunter Tri, the latest game in its hit multiplayer creature-slaying series, will be hitting North America in spring 2010. The Monster Hunter franchise has been one of the most popular in Japan in recent years, and Tri marks the first installment developed exclusively for the Wii console. For the uninitiated, Monster Hunter is a series in which teams of up to four online players venture into the wilderness to track down and defeat giant dinosaurlike beasts. You can select from several types of weapons—swords, hammers, bow guns, lances, and more—and by using goods obtained from fallen creatures, you can craft hundreds of pieces of armor for your character's head, chest, arms, legs, and waist; the combinations are virtually limitless. Those basics are still in place in Tri, and the game also adds several series firsts, including underwater monster combat and new ecosystem elements that allow monsters to interact with each other intelligently. Monster Hunter Tri is already a monster (pun intended) hit in Japan—it sold 1.6 million copies in preorders alone—and Capcom hopes to have similar success when the game crosses the Pacific. —**CHRIS H.**

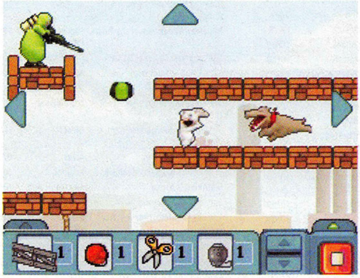


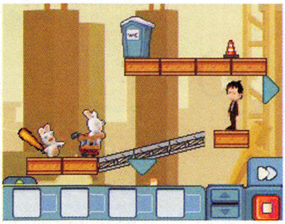


Going Mental

This holiday, the Rabbids put on their thinking caps in the puzzle-centric Nintendo DS version of **Rabbids Go Home**.

Once Rabbids Go Home for Wii was announced, it was almost a given that it would come to the Nintendo DS handheld as well. But although it does share the same basic story as its Wii sibling—the Rabbids are trying to build a mountain of junk in order to reach what they think is their home, the moon—the game itself is radically different. Instead of the straightforward platforming, this dual-screened version is what publisher Ubisoft is calling a "puzzle-platformer." The Rabbids maneuver through the world with their shopping cart (in 2-D as opposed to 3-D), but they solve puzzles to progress. With 150 puzzles to solve across 15 levels (which works out to 10 puzzles a level—that's using the ol' noggin'), as well as four challenge modes, there should be plenty of variety. But if that's not enough, you can download puzzles other people have made, or create and upload your own. **—JUSTIN C.**





Get your shopping cart to the goal by solving physics-based puzzles.

Sharpening the Blade

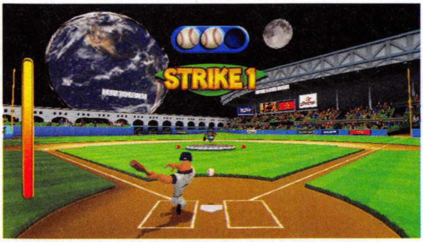
The upcoming holiday season just got a little less exciting (or more affordable, depending on your point of view). Ubisoft has pushed back the release of Red Steel 2 to the first quarter of next year. The reason given for the delay is that the development team requested more time to polish certain levels. So it should ultimately be for the best, but that doesn't make the wait any easier. **—STEVE T.**

Here Comes the Pain

The top-selling UFC 2009 Undisputed may not have hit Nintendo platforms this year, but THQ CEO Brian Farrell wants that to change in the near future. Speaking with investors in a conference call, Farrell said the publisher plans on making UFC games for Wii and handhelds (which almost undoubtedly includes the Nintendo DS). **—JUSTIN C.**

Swing Set

The publisher of The Bigs goes small with **Baseball Blast!**, an MLB-licensed collection of minigames centered on the national pastime.



The Pittsburgh Pirates may be cellar dwellers this season, but real pirates prove to be competitive in Cannonballs!, a slugger-versus-scalawag minigame that is one of more than 20 diamond-inspired challenges in 2K Sports's Baseball Blast! Other takes on the game include Bumper Base, which mixes base runners with bumper cars; and Pennant Race, which follows the flight of the ball through speed boosts and past fielders on its way to the fence. Season Blast! mode puts a single player through the rigors of a minigame marathon. Multiplayer mode allows two players to compete. A baseball-trivia contest and a card-based bonus strategy game round out the collection. Bob Uecker, who played beleaguered announcer Harry Doyle in the *Major League* movies, hosts. The title debuts just in time for the playoffs, in late September. **—GEORGE S.**

NEWS *from* JAPAN!

BY *the* NUMBERS

JULY 11, 2009:

Dragon Quest IX Hits Japan

SALES AFTER TWO DAYS:

2.34 million

DS HARDWARE SALES INCREASE THAT WEEK:

152%

REVIEW SCORES IN FAMITSU MAGAZINE:

10, 10, 10, 10

(SALES DATA FROM MEDIA CREATE)

Double Duty

On November 10th, the award-winning **Call of Duty: Modern Warfare** finally takes the fight to Wii courtesy of developer Treyarch (who did a commendable job on the Wii version of Call of Duty: World at War). That same day, the DS gets its own installment of the venerable franchise with **Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Mobilized**. Developed by n-Space, Mobilized mixes building-to-building tactical combat with lots of vehicular hijinx, and tells a unique story that ties into the console games. Online play for up to six combatants is also in the works. Look for a full briefing on both titles next month. —**STEVE T.**

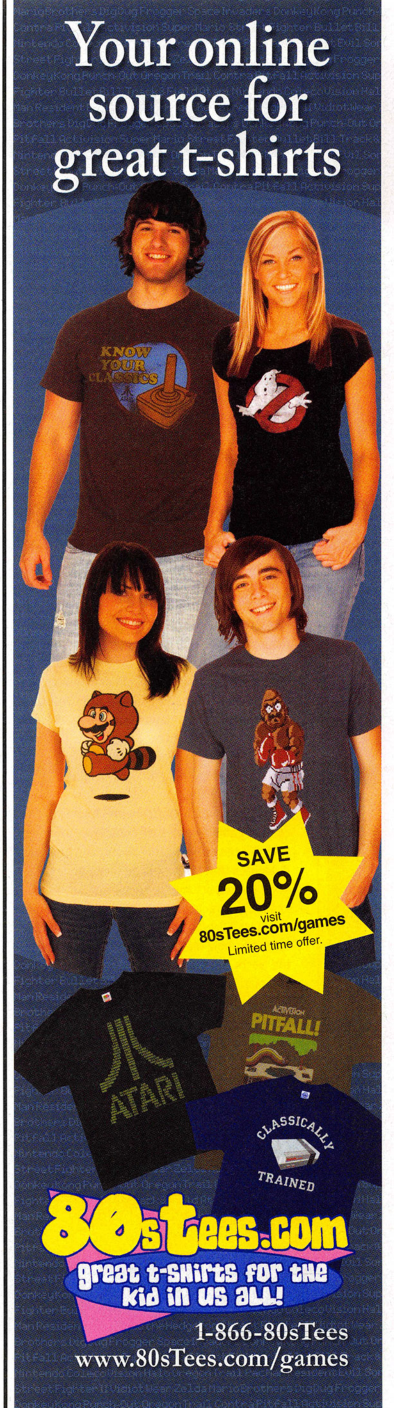
GAME WATCH

forecast

Wii		
101-in-1 Party Megamix	Atlus	10/09
Academy of Champions	Ubisoft	11/09
All Star Cheer Squad 2	THQ	10/09
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel	Majesco	HOL 09
Arc Rise Fantasia	XSEED	2/10
Astro Boy: The Video Game	D3Publisher	10/09
Bakugan Battle Brawlers	Activision	10/09
Band Hero	Activision	11/09
Baseball Blast!	2K Sports	9/09
Ben 10 Alien Force: Vilgax Attacks	D3Publisher	10/09
The Biggest Loser	THQ	10/09
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	10/09
Build-A-Bear Workshop: Friendship Valley	The Game Factory	10/09
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Activision	11/09
Calling	Hudson	SPR 10
Cars Race-O-Rama	THQ	10/09
Chaotic	Activision	11/09
Charm Girls Club: Pajama Party	Electronic Arts	10/09
Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs	Ubisoft	9/09
CSI: Deadly Intent	Ubisoft	10/09
Dance Dance Revolution	Konami	10/09
The Daring Game for Girls	Majesco	10/09
Dead Space Extraction	Electronic Arts	9/09
Deca Sports 2	Hudson	9/09
Def Jam Rapstar	4mm	2009
Disney Sing It: Pop Hits	Disney	9/09
DJ Hero	Activision	10/09
Dodge Racing: Charger vs. Challenger	Zoo	11/09
Dragon Ball: Revenge of King Piccolo	Namco Bandai	10/09
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	THQ	10/09
Dreamworks Madagascar Kartz	Activision	10/09
EA Sports Active—Expansion Pack 1	Electronic Arts	HOL 09
Endless Ocean 2	Nintendo	Q1 10
Family Fun Football	Tecmo	9/09
Family Party: 30 Great Games Outdoor Fun	D3Publisher	9/09
Fast Food Panic	SouthPeak	10/09
FIFA Soccer 10	Electronic Arts	10/09
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	Q4 09
Flip's Twisted World	Majesco	WIN 09
Food Network: Cook or Be Cooked	Namco Bandai	11/09
Fragile: Farewell Ruins of the Moon	XSEED	1/10
Geon Cube*	UFO	10/09
Gladiator A.D.	TBA	TBA
Grease	505	TBA
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
The Hardy Boys: The Hidden Theft	Dreamcatcher	9/09
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade	Natsume	10/09
Hasbro Family Game Night 2	Electronic Arts	10/09
Hot Wheels: Battle Force 5	Activision	11/09
iCarly	Activision	10/09
Jakers! Let's Explore	Graffiti	Q3 09
Jambo! Safari Animal Rescue	Sega	WIN 09
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	Ubisoft	11/09
Jillian Michaels' Fitness Ultimatum 2010	Majesco	FALL 09
Ju-on: The Grudge	XSEED	10/09
Karaoke Revolution	Konami	11/09
The Legend of Zelda*	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	LucasArts	11/09
LEGO Rock Band	Warner Bros.	11/09
Line Attack Heroes	Nintendo	TBA
Littlest Pet Shop Friends	Electronic Arts	10/09
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	10/09
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	Sega	10/09
Marvel Super Hero Squad	THQ	10/09
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	Activision	9/09
Metroid: Other M	Nintendo	2010
Monado: Beginning of the World	Nintendo	TBA
Monkey Ball: Step & Roll	Sega	SPR 10
Monster Hunter Tri	Capcom	Q1 10
Mr. T	TBA	TBA
My Baby 2	SouthPeak	11/09
MySims Agents	Electronic Arts	9/09
Naruto Shippuden: Clash of Ninja Revolution 3	Tomy	11/09
Need for Speed Nitro	Electronic Arts	11/09
Nerf 2: N-Strike Elite	Electronic Arts	10/09
New Super Mario Bros. Wii	Nintendo	HOL 09
No More Heroes: Desperate Struggle	Ubisoft	Q1 10
Our House: Party!	Majesco	10/09
Pizza Boy	Majesco	2009
Planet 51	Sega	11/09
Pop'n Music	Konami	FALL 09
The Princess and the Frog	Disney	11/09
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010	Konami	FALL 09
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Rabbids Go Home	Ubisoft	10/09
Red Steel 2	Ubisoft	Q1 10
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles	Capcom	11/09
Resident Evil Archives: Resident Evil Zero	Capcom	1/10
Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus	2K Play	10/09
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	NIS America	11/09
Sam & Max Season Two	Atari	2009
Scooby-Doo: First Frights!	Warner Bros.	9/09
The Secret Saturdays: Beasts of the 5th Sun	D3Publisher	10/09
Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage	Ubisoft	11/09
Shiren the Wanderer	Atlus	Q2 10
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	Konami	10/09
SimAnimals Africa	Electronic Arts	10/09
Sin and Punishment 2	Nintendo	Q1 10
The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces	XSEED	HOL 09
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	FALL 09
Sled Shred	SouthPeak	11/09
Smart Kid's Journey to Adventure	UFO	11/09
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	Sega	Q1 10
Span Smasher	Nintendo	TBA
SpongeBob's Truth or Square	THQ	11/09
Spore Hero	Electronic Arts	10/09
Spyborgs	Capcom	9/09
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	LucasArts	10/09
The Strike	Psyclone/XS Games	9/09
Super Mario Galaxy 2	Nintendo	2010
Sushi Go Round	SouthPeak	Q4 09
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars	Capcom	WIN 09
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash Up	Ubisoft	9/09
Tony Hawk: Ride	Activision	10/09
Tower of Shadow*	Hudson	SUM 10
Toy Story Mania!	Disney	9/09
Ultimate Party Challenge	Konami	FALL 09
Wacky World of Sports	Sega	9/09
We Cheer 2	Namco Bandai	11/09
Where the Wild Things Are	Warner Bros.	10/09
Where's Waldo? The Fantastic Journey	Ubisoft	9/09
Wii Fit Plus	Nintendo	FALL 09
World of Zoo	THQ	10/09
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	THQ	11/09
Your Shape	Ubisoft	11/09
NINTENDO DS		
Academy of Champions	Ubisoft	11/09
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth	Capcom	2/10

Agatha Christie: The ABC Murders	Dreamcatcher	10/09
All Star Cheer Squad 2	THQ	10/09
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel	Majesco	HOL 09
Astro Boy: The Video Game	D3Publisher	10/09
Atelier Annie: Alchemists of Sera Island	NIS America	FALL 09
Bakugan Battle Brawlers	Activision	10/09
Balloon Pop DS	UFO	11/09
Band Hero	Activision	11/09
Barbie 3-Musketeers	Activision	10/09
Battles of Giants: Dragons	Ubisoft	9/09
Ben 10 Alien Force: Vilgax Attacks	D3Publisher	10/09
The Biggest Loser	THQ	10/09
Blood Bowl	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Cake Mania 3	Majesco	FALL 09
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Mobilized	Activision	11/09
Cars Race-O-Rama	THQ	10/09
Chaotic	Activision	11/09
Charm Girls Club: My Fashion Mall	Electronic Arts	10/09
Charm Girls Club: My Fashion Show	Electronic Arts	10/09
Charm Girls Club: My Perfect Prom	Electronic Arts	10/09
Chocolatier	Zoo	11/09
A Christmas Carol	Disney	11/09
Chronicles of Mystery: Curse of the Ancient Temple	City	9/09
Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs	Ubisoft	9/09
Cooking Mama 3	Majesco	11/09
C.O.P. The Recruit	Ubisoft	10/09
Crime Scene	SouthPeak	12/09
CSI: Deadly Intent	Ubisoft	10/09
The Daring Game for Girls	Majesco	10/09
Dawn of Heroes	Majesco	Q3 09
Dementium II	SouthPeak	2/10
Diner Dash: Flo on the Go	Zoo	11/09
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
DJ Star	Deep Silver	Q3 09
Dodge Racing: Charger vs. Challenger	Zoo	10/09
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Ball Z: Attack of the Saiyans	Namco Bandai	11/09
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	THQ	10/09
Dream Chronicles	Zoo	11/09
Dreamworks Madagascar Kartz	Activision	10/09
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	2009
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	10/09
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	2009
Fast Food Panic	SouthPeak	10/09
FIFA Soccer 10	Electronic Arts	10/09
Fighting Fantasy: The Warlock of Firetop Mountain	Aspyr	Q4 09
Glory of Heracles	Nintendo	2010
Golden Sun DS	Nintendo	2010
Grease	505	TBA
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands	Natsume	11/09
Hasbro Family Game Night 2	Electronic Arts	10/09
Hero's Saga: Laevatein Tactics	Aksys	9/09
Hot 'n' Cold	Majesco	2009
Hot Wheels: Battle Force 5	Activision	11/09
House M.D.	Legacy	HOL 09
iCarly	Activision	10/09
Imagine Artist	Ubisoft	10/09
Imagine Salon Stylist	Ubisoft	9/09
Imagine Zookeeper	Ubisoft	FALL 09
Infinite Space	Sega	2009
Jam Sessions 2	Ubisoft	9/09
Jambo! Safari Animal Rescue	Sega	11/09
James Patterson Women's Murder Club: Games of Passion	THQ	10/09
Jillian Michaels' Pocket Trainer 2010	Majesco	FALL 09
Jonas	Disney	11/09
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	Square Enix	9/09
Last King of Africa	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks	Nintendo	HOL 09
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	LucasArts	11/09
LEGO Rock Band	Warner Bros.	11/09
Littlest Pet Shop: Beach Friends	Electronic Arts	10/09
Littlest Pet Shop: City Friends	Electronic Arts	10/09
Littlest Pet Shop: Country Friends	Electronic Arts	10/09
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	10/09
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	Sega	10/09
Marvel Super Hero Squad	THQ	10/09
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	Activision	9/09
Moomin: The Mysterious Howling	Graffiti	Q3 09
Music	SouthPeak	FALL 09
MX vs. ATV Reflex	THQ	Q4 09
My Baby 2	SouthPeak	11/09
MySims Agents	Electronic Arts	9/09
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Destiny 2	Tomy	9/09
Need for Speed Nitro	Electronic Arts	11/09
Nostalgia	Ignition	9/09
Our House	Majesco	10/09
Petz Dogz Talent Show	Ubisoft	11/09
Petz Hamsterz Superstarz	Ubisoft	11/09
Petz Nursery	Ubisoft	10/09
Phantasy Star Ø	Sega	11/09
Picross 3D	Nintendo	TBA
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Planet 51	Sega	11/09
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky	Nintendo	10/09
Prank Your Neighbor	Dreamcatcher	TBA
Press Your Luck 2010	Ubisoft	10/09
The Princess and the Frog	Disney	11/09
Puzzle Chronicles	Konami	11/09
Rabbids Go Home	Ubisoft	HOL 09
Ragnarok Online DS	XSEED	WIN 09
Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus	2K Play	10/09
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Samantha Swift and the Hidden Roses of Athena	MumboJumbo	10/09
Sands of Destruction	Sega	1/10
Scooby-Doo: First Frights!	Warner Bros.	9/09
Scribblenauts	Warner Bros.	9/09
Secret Flirts	SouthPeak	12/09
The Secret Saturdays: Beasts of the 5th Sun	D3Publisher	10/09
SimAnimals Africa	Electronic Arts	10/09
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	FALL 09
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	Sega	Q1 10
Space Invaders Extreme 2	Square Enix	10/09
SpongeBob's Truth or Square	THQ	11/09
Spore Hero Arena	Electronic Arts	9/09
Squishy Tank	Natsume	9/09
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	LucasArts	11/09
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	LucasArts	10/09
Style Lab: Jewelry Design	Ubisoft	11/09
Style Lab: Makeover	Ubisoft	11/09
Style Savvy	Nintendo	HOL 09
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Arcade Attack	Ubisoft	11/09
Tinker Bell and the Lost Treasure	Disney	FALL 09
Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames	Q4 09
Ultimate Card Games	Telegames	Q4 09
WarioWare D.I.Y.	Nintendo	TBA
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
Wedding Dash	Zoo	11/09
WireWay	Konami	FALL 09
Where the Wild Things Are	Warner Bros.	10/09
Where's Waldo? The Fantastic Journey	Ubisoft	9/09
A Witch's Tale	NIS America	10/09
World of Zoo	THQ	10/09
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	THQ	11/09

RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH. *TENTATIVE TITLE NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.



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The Doc Is In

exclusive **INTERVIEW**

The inside story behind one of the coolest video game gifts ever given.

It isn't every day that Nintendo gives away a new game from one of its biggest franchises, so it's easy to understand the excitement over Doc Louis's Punch-Out!!, a stand-alone bonus bout that's being offered only to Platinum-level Club Nintendo members. We spoke with Shu Fujii, assistant manager, Planning and Development at Nintendo of America, to learn how the exclusive download and other cool Club Nintendo rewards came about. —CHRIS SL.

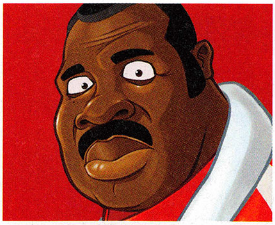
NINTENDO POWER **Why did Nintendo choose to offer rewards to Club Nintendo members, and how were the rewards chosen?**

SHU FUJII June 30th marked the end of the Club Nintendo Year, and members who had reached a set coin amount before that date earned a Gold or Platinum reward, based on their status. These Special Elite Status Rewards are just a small gesture to show our appreciation.

The Gold and Platinum members of Club Nintendo are among Nintendo's most loyal fans. We very much appreciate their loyalty; many of them registered products for years at My Nintendo and migrated their accounts to Club Nintendo. Since this is Club Nintendo's first year in North America, we wanted to provide something extraspecial to our most loyal fans, and we felt that nothing was more special than a game developed especially for Platinum members. We are thrilled to offer Doc Louis's Punch-Out!! as a Special Reward for Platinum members. We are also excited to offer an exclusive, authentic Mario hat as a choice to Platinum members, and an exclusive desk calendar for Gold members.

Doc Louis's Punch-Out!! seems like one of the coolest game freebies we could ever imagine. How did the project come about, and how was it decided that Doc would be the opponent?

I had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Tanabe and Mr. Sakamoto, the producers of Punch-Out!!, this past May, and our conversation naturally turned to how much Punch-Out!! was loved by the North American audience. This was when I was planning the year-end rewards for the club, so I asked Mr. Tanabe if it would be possible to have a game about Punch-Out!! created just for our Platinum members. Mr. Tanabe graciously accepted the request, and we all agreed right away that the game should be about Doc Louis. We felt he was a strong character who is loved by many Punch-Out!! fans here in North America. I mean, why *not* make a game about Doc Louis? That evening, we discussed what the content of the game should be. We had decided that this would be a downloadable reward, so it needed to be a fairly compact game experience. We came up with ideas such as creating a low-fi NES-style game with Doc Louis, and having him participate in an 8-bit bicycle race with upbeat chip-tune music. Our discussion continued after they returned to Japan, and I was surprised when Mr. Sakamoto called me a few weeks later to inform me that Next Level Games would be making this game. All these conversations occurred after the Wii game development was complete, and Punch-Out!! was awaiting release in retail stores. This idea was not conceived of during the original development at all; this is a special game that was planned from scratch after the main game was complete, so we could provide an exclusive experience to our Platinum members. The game is not done yet as I am writing this, but I have played the most recent version and I have a feeling that fans will be very happy with this; it's got more to it than just a demo game, and you can see Next Level Games's attention to detail in every aspect of the game. I hope our Platinum members will be excited when they download and play the game.



Doc looks like a pretty tough sparring partner; his constant intake of chocolate bars probably has him so jacked up on sugar that he could punch through a brick wall.

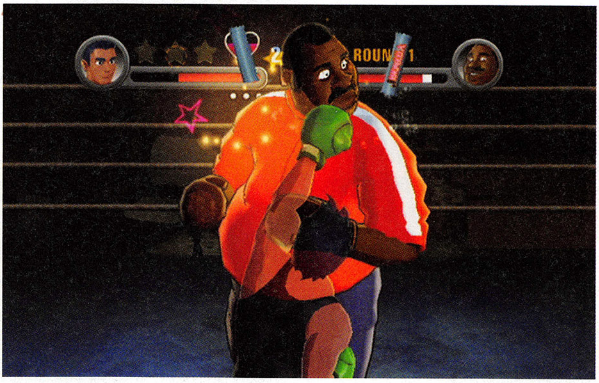
How do you approach picking the regular rewards for Club Nintendo?

We choose rewards that we feel will make our fans smile, and serve as a small gesture of thanks for taking the time to register and provide feedback on Nintendo products. We want to reward our members in ways that only Club Nintendo can. So when we decide which rewards to offer at Club Nintendo, we make sure that the items are not available anywhere else—what you see in the rewards catalog now is exclusive to the club. Club Nintendo rewards must also meet Nintendo's strict safety and quality standards. We collaborate with our colleagues at Club Nintendo in Japan when considering what rewards to offer in North America.

Finally, how have the fans received Club Nintendo during its first year in North America, and can you hint at any upcoming Club Nintendo news?

Very well—we are extremely grateful that North American fans have embraced Club Nintendo. In March, we were excited to offer Platinum members in select cities an exclusive opportunity to sample the Nintendo DSi prior to its release date. We can't provide any hints yet, but we hope to continue surprising and delighting our members. We are very thankful for their support!

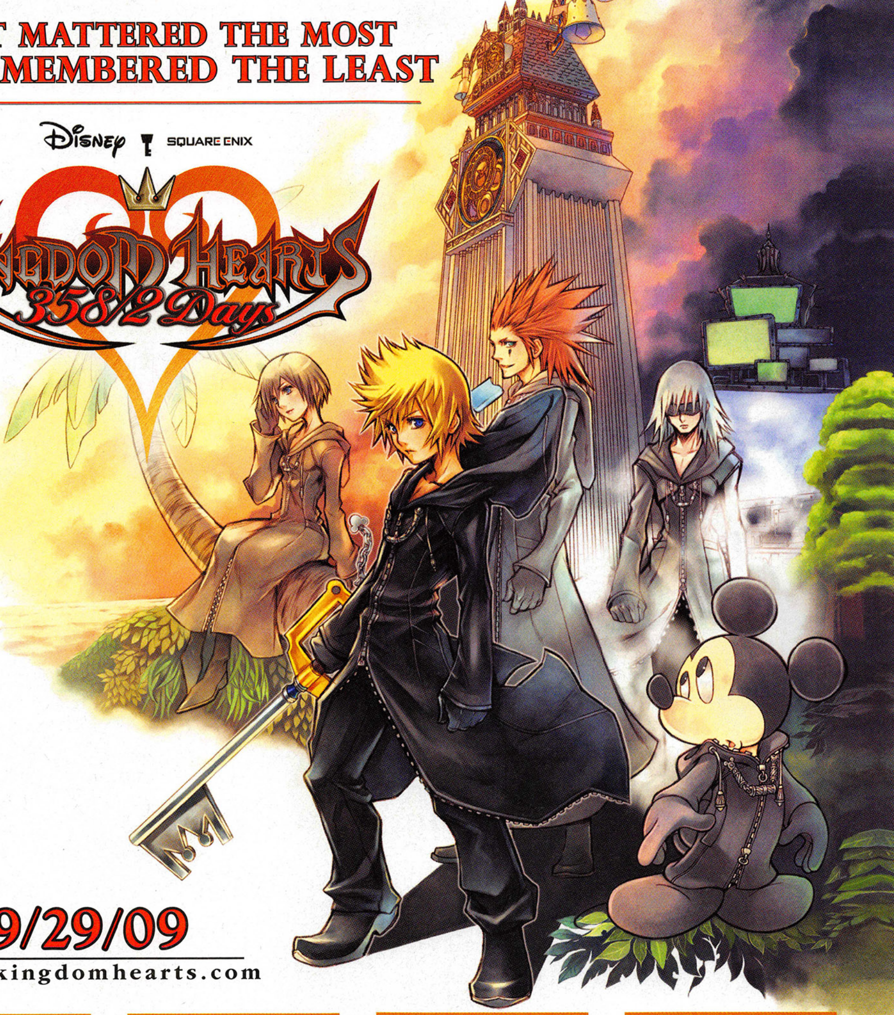
9
1:59
ROUND 1



WHAT MATTERED THE MOST WAS REMEMBERED THE LEAST

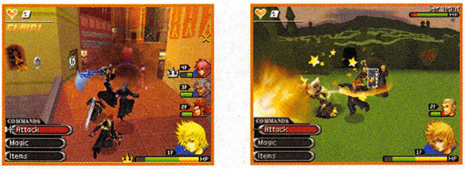
DISNEY SQUARE ENIX

KINGDOM HEARTS 358/2 Days

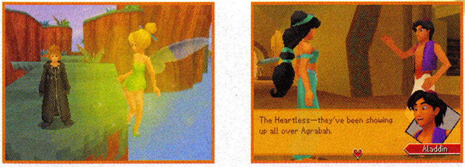


9/29/09

www.kingdomhearts.com



Play alone or with up to 4 friends in the series-first multiplayer mode!



The Heartless—they've been showing up all over Agrabah.

Appearances from familiar Disney characters, such as King Mickey, Aladdin, Tinker Bell, and more!

EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
Fantasy Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

NINTENDO DS™ Disney SQUARE ENIX

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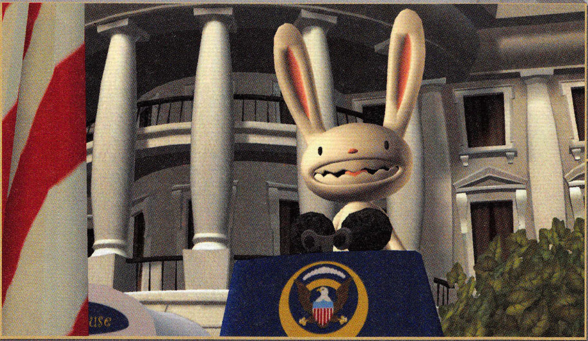
DEMOS



MODS

Current Traits
Childish
Good
Hopeless Romantic
Excitable
Easily Impressed
Evil
Excitable
Family-Oriented
Flirty
Friendly
Frugal
Excitable

Excitable Sims get excited about...pretty much everything. They enjoy an extra dose of self-satisfaction when good things happen for them in life.

PATCHES

.EXPAND.GAMIN

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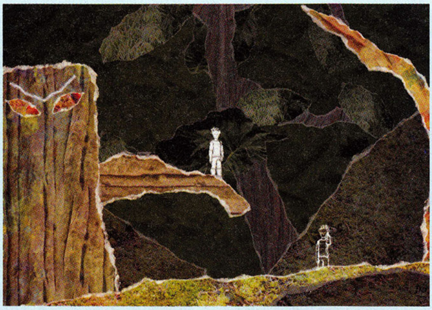
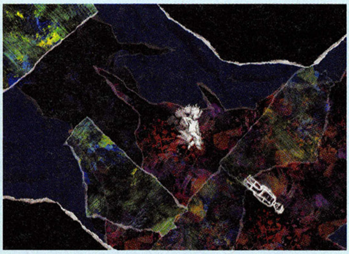




All it takes is a button press to rotate the entire game world. The transparent characters are level checkpoints.

Go for a Spin

WiiWare title **And Yet It Moves** puts an innovative twist—quite literally—on the platforming genre.

If you think 2-D platformers are out of fresh ideas, you obviously haven't heard of And Yet It Moves. Created by four-person Austrian developer Broken Rules, the game is already a sensation on Mac and PC, and if all goes according to plan, the groundbreaking title should be out on WiiWare before the end of the year.

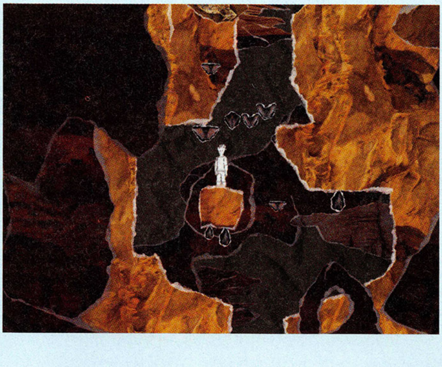
What sets And Yet It Moves apart from other platformers is that, in addition to running and jumping through 17 increasingly complex levels, you can rotate the entire game world at 90-degree intervals—or completely upside down—at any time, thereby adding an exciting, challenging, puzzlelike layer to the action. Impenetrable barriers become floors, ceilings become traversable routes, and impossible jumps are suddenly within reach. You'll find yourself constantly rotating your environment to overcome the myriad of environmental obstacles you encounter, but there can be negative consequences to your actions as well; your character can't survive long falls, so you'll have to be careful you don't turn a passageway into a deadly pit, or accidentally crush yourself with a boulder.

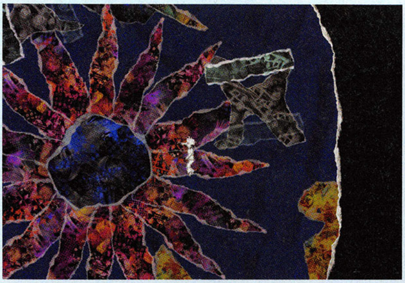
Rotating the game world is And Yet It Moves's most compelling component, but it certainly isn't its only hook. The game also boasts a unique ripped-paper-collage aesthetic that's unlike anything else on WiiWare. Surrealistic layers of stones, trees, grass, and psychedelic tie-dye patterns will pull you in as you journey from a network of caves to a lush jungle and into a snakebite-induced fantasy world. And while making this trip once promises to be packed with thrills and never-before-encountered challenges, the creators have included numerous features in the Mac/PC version to increase the replay value, including a speed-run mode against other players' ghost characters (à la Mario Kart), marathon sessions through each environment, and online scoreboards—all of which the dev team hopes to include in the WiiWare version.

To learn more about this unique and compelling take on platforming, we interviewed game designer and project lead Felix Bohatsch of Broken Rules. —CHRIS H.

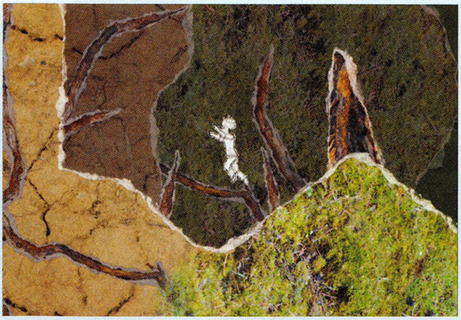
NINTENDO POWER **What are the origins of And Yet It Moves? We know it started as a student project, but what inspired this particular idea and made you feel it would make a compelling game?**

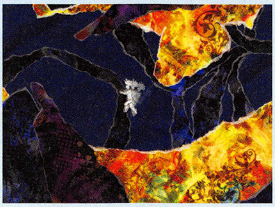
FELIX BOHATSCH Yes, our game started in 2006 as a...project held by the Department for Design and Assessment of Technology at the Vienna University of Technology. Our supervisors wanted us to do a game in a 2-D space, because they wanted us to focus on the game design rather than some technical challenges. Our reaction to this was to look at how we could empower the player more than in usual 2-D games. We tried to find a way to give the player more abilities of spatial navigation than he/she usually has. The idea to turn the world was only one of a few, but it immediately triggered a lot of gameplay situations and ideas for challenges in our head. We liked the simplicity of it and could imagine a lot of cool ways to use it in-game.





The level designs get pretty crazy, especially in the third chapter.





What made you bring the game to WiiWare?
We think that our game would be a good fit for any of the three consoles as it does not need any specific hardware power nor a special input. Still, finding useful Wii Remote control for the game always seemed like an interesting challenge. We never singled one of the Big Three out, but the cool thing is that a representative of Nintendo saw our game at an IndieCade showcase and contacted us. Of course we were interested in getting our game to WiiWare, so we immediately said yes.

What does the title of the game refer to?
The name is a legendary saying by Galileo Galilei, who uttered these words after being forced to recant his theory that the Earth moves around the sun. So what he meant with it was, yes, the Earth is rotating around the sun, and that's also what the world is doing in our game: it's rotating.

The name was actually suggested by colleagues at the university course we made the game for after we presented it. We immediately liked its indirect link to the main game mechanic and we also like the ambiguity of the name. Who is the center of what, what rotates around what, etc., as that keeps the player's mind open and unsure what to expect of the game.

How will the game control on Wii? Will there be multiple control options?
Yes, there will be multiple control options. We are currently experimenting with the input schemes but plan to have them playable at GDC [Game Developers Conference] Europe. We are trying to find good controls for the new, more relaxed players as well as for the ones who are going to play the game more for the competition. For the hardcore ones it's quite easy, as they need instant and very exact controls, and the Classic Controller can deliver that best.

For the more relaxed players we are trying to find a way to more directly link the rotation to the controller. One problem many people who play the game for the first time are having is to rotate in the right direction, and we are trying to counter that. One way to fortify intuition might be by holding the Wii Remote horizontally and rotating the world by rotating the remote. This way the player has a direct link because the remote is like your floor and when you rotate it the floor will rotate like the controller. Another way might include the pointer, but we are still working on that.

How did you approach level design in a game of this type?
All you need is a big piece of paper, or several smaller ones, which we usually taped together. We never started out designing the whole level at once, though. Instead we started thinking about possible environments that would emphasize a journey from down to up.

Originally we wanted And Yet It Moves to have four environments, but we ditched the fourth environment, the sky, in favor of more realized ideas in chapter two and chapter three. So now our character's journey ends with a hallucination instead of enlightenment in the sky. I guess that's more like real life anyway.

Are there any fundamental differences between the three different environments?
Yes, there are. In the first chapter we tried to build challenges that help the player understand the mechanics and the rules of our world and get to grips with the controls. There are mostly puzzles that only involve physics on the character and maybe a few extra stones to keep track of. In chapter two, where the character breaks out of the cave and reaches the jungle, the world gets more lively. Your path leads over trees moving with the wind and you'll encounter animals that need to be pleased or used to get on with your journey. The puzzle elements get more complex, and using the rotation to solve it isn't that straightforward anymore. The platforming elements are also more difficult....

In the aforementioned chapters we tried to design challenges that fit the environment—that is, that seem logical [in their] place in the world. But in chapter three we send the character on a hallucinating trip and thus the world gets more abstract, and we were able to use more traditional platform elements like fading and moving platforms that do not feel out of place.

What made you settle on the paper-collage art style?
That design mostly arose out of necessity. We are a team of four computer-science students and—even if we consider ourselves not to be typical technical students without any knowledge about aesthetics, etc.—our team lacked a specialized visual game artist. We looked for a style we liked that we would be able to produce. The roughness and analog feel of a world set in a paper collage provided just what we wanted, without the necessity of dedicated artists building it.

We always liked to think that the unique selling point of And Yet It Moves is its core mechanic of being able to rotate the world. We soon realized, though, that it's the look and feel of our game that draw people in, and what most people are interested in in the first place.

Is there a storyline to the game? Does the character have a name?
We consciously decided to leave a real story out of And Yet It Moves. This is our first game, so we wanted to focus on the game design and put all our effort [into getting] this part nice and polished. We decided to leave a narrative part out because it would have either meant way more work and thus an even longer development process, or a cheesy storyline that just feels tacked on.

No, the character doesn't officially have a name. But Andy—because of *And Yet It Moves*—is one that popped up sometimes.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell WiiWare users about And Yet It Moves?
Although And Yet It Moves has not been built originally for Wii and has not been designed around the abilities of the Wii Remote, we think that it is a great fit for the platform. So if you enjoyed games like Lost Winds or World of Goo, we are sure you will find a great experience in And Yet It Moves. Additionally, we are looking forward to playing with new ideas for our next game, especially now that the Wii MotionPlus is coming up.

SEGA GENESIS 20TH ANNIVERSARY
SEGA GENESIS
16-BIT
VOLUME
RESET
ON
OFF
POWER
ON

Genesis Still Does

We celebrate the **20th anniversary of the Sega Genesis** with a look at the games that defined the system—and are now available on Virtual Console.

In 1989, Sega introduced the North American gaming public to the Sega Genesis: a sleek, powerful 16-bit console that would prove to be the greatest dark horse in video game history. At the time, the Nintendo Entertainment System enjoyed a market share of more than 90 percent, and though Sega had long been a force in arcades, the company's previous forays into the home—most notably the Sega Master System—failed to make a splash. But the Genesis ushered in what many consider the golden age of video games, sparking a legendary console war between Sega and Nintendo that would bring out the best in both companies. By the time it was over, worldwide Genesis sales had reached nearly 30 million, and Sega had become a household name.

Though some measure of that success was the result of memorable marketing (e.g., "Genesis Does What Nintendon't" and the Sega scream), the Genesis was home to a diverse and compelling software lineup that offered something different from previous consoles. For starters, it brought many of Sega's arcade hits to the living room, with greater fidelity than ever before. It also aged things up a bit. While Nintendo catered mostly to young kids, the Genesis appealed to a broader audience with stuff like Golden Axe, Streets of Rage, and serious sports sims.

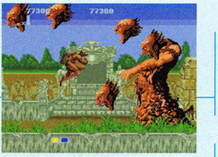
What's truly remarkable is how many of the platform's greatest titles came from Sega itself. Nintendo's dominance up until that point, coupled with the failure of Sega's previous consoles, meant third parties weren't exactly tripping over each other to support the Genesis, especially early on. So Sega picked up the slack. Few, if any, publishers can boast such a prolific period, and Sega was the first to employ top-notch development from around the globe.

For those who want to relive this important chapter in video game history or experience it for the first time, we've assembled a Virtual Console play list of the games that defined the Genesis. Download, enjoy, and...*Sega*!

SEGA
GENESIS
16-BIT CARTRIDGE
ALTERED BEAST
16-BIT CARTRIDGE
FOR USE WITH THE SEGA GENESIS VIDEO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

1989

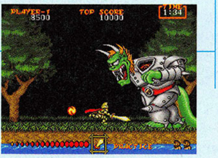
8/89



ALTERED BEAST

Altered Beast, the original pack-in game with the Genesis, showed what the system was all about: delivering nearly arcade-perfect gaming right in your own home (which was the Holy Grail of gaming back in the day). Admittedly, Altered Beast isn't an all-time classic, but its unique hook—being able to power up into an assortment of werebeasts—is pretty darn cool.

12/89



GHOULS'N GHOSTS

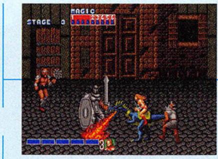
The Genesis didn't have a ton of third-party support initially, but Sega licensed and published a handful of Capcom arcade games for the system, including an awesome conversion of Ghouls'n Ghosts. The sequel to Ghosts'n Goblins improved upon its predecessor in many ways (such as by allowing you to attack enemies above and below you), and fantastic graphics drove home the spooky atmosphere.

BY STEVE THOMASON, CHRIS HOFFMAN, AND CASEY LOE

1990

GOLDEN AXE

Golden Axe was yet another hit arcade game ported to the Genesis, but what made this one stand out—aside from its exemplary co-op hack-and-slash action and captivating fantasy setting—is that it actually went beyond the coin-op with two all-new levels and some additional modes. Cool magic attacks and a great sense of impact to your attacks help this one stand the test of time. (Too bad its sequels weren't as good.)

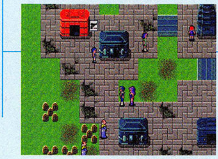


1/90

GENESIS
PHANTASY STAR II
16-BIT CARTRIDGE

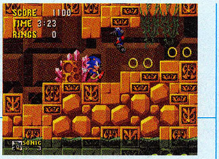
PHANTASY STAR II

Phantasy Star II was a game of many firsts. It broke new ground with a sci-fi theme and a large cast of playable characters who had actual personalities and character arcs. Its narrative was packed with shocking plot twists (in an era in which having a plot was shocking enough!), and even made a bold attempt at social commentary years before Final Fantasy started getting preachy. But most notably, it told the first real video game tragedy, and still stands as one of the most powerfully sad games ever made.



3/90

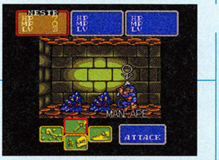
1991



6/91

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

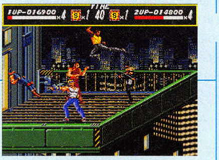
Tasked with creating a mascot to counter Mario, a small group of Sega's most talented developers responded with one of the greatest and most influential games of all time. Sonic the Hedgehog's winning formula combined unprecedented speed with masterful platforming, memorable locales, infectious music, and a truly iconic character. Such was Sonic's popularity, it spawned countless copycats starring anthropomorphic animals with 'tude. Unfortunately, most of these imitators missed the point and were roundly terrible. (We're looking at you, Bubsy.) The quality of Sonic's recent offerings may be a topic of some debate, but the original remains an undeniable classic.



8/91

SHINING IN THE DARKNESS

The first-ever game in Sega's loosely organized Shining series, Shining in the Darkness was followed by Shining Force, which emerged as the franchise's breakout hit. But Shining in the Darkness deserves better than to languish in Shining Force's shadow. It was one of a very few first-person dungeon-crawling RPGs in the era, and its warm, hand-drawn look has aged much better than the coldly geometric aesthetic of its rivals. Shining in the Darkness didn't have much of a story and its battles were very tedious, but its colorful, cartoony visuals are gorgeous and look like nothing being made today.

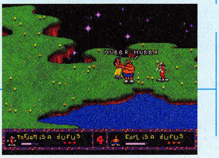


9/91

STREETS OF RAGE

Streets of Rage was essentially Sega's answer to Final Fight (which was released around the same time on the Super NES). Both games offered in-your-face side-scrolling bare-knuckled brawls, along with weapons, special attacks, and aggressive enemies, but only Streets of Rage provided co-op gameplay and an acclaimed soundtrack by Yuzo Koshiro (the hottest game-music composer at the time).

GENESIS
STREETS OF RAGE



10/91

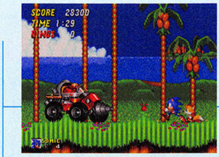
TOEJAM & EARL

This tale of two funk-loving aliens stranded on Earth exemplifies Sega's willingness to take risks during the Genesis era. ToeJam & Earl's unconventional gameplay is overshadowed only by its offbeat and subtly satiric sense of humor. It all comes together brilliantly, though, especially if you embark on the journey with a friend in co-op mode. The game was initially a disappointment at retail, but strong word of mouth eventually rewarded Sega's gamble with a sleeper hit.

1992

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2

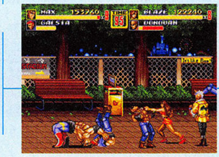
In a first for the video game business, Sega built up the release date for Sonic the Hedgehog 2—dubbed Sonic 2sday—as a major media event. The hotly anticipated sequel was a smash hit, and cemented the Blue Blur's place among gaming's elite. In fact, Sonic the Hedgehog 2 actually outperformed the original game, with more than six million copies sold worldwide. Among its most significant additions were 3-D bonus stages and the introduction of Tails, Sonic's mutant-squirrel pal, as a second playable character.



11/92

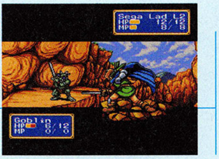
STREETS OF RAGE 2

The first Streets of Rage was great, but Streets of Rage 2 was even better. Better graphics, bigger sprites, new special moves, more playable characters with a more diverse set of moves, and an even more rockin' soundtrack were among the highlights. The third Streets of Rage game (released in 1994) wasn't as stellar, but we'd be more than happy if Sega ever decides to continue the series.



12/92

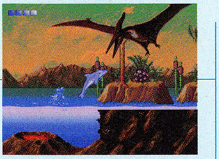
1993



3/93

SHINING FORCE

Long before Golden Sun was a twinkle in their eye, brothers Hiroyuki and Shugo Takahashi gave us Shining Force. This seminal strategy-RPG hooked armchair generals with its extensive unit variety, rich fantasy setting, and cinematic battle scenes. Plus, each of your troops could earn a promotion (Knight to Paladin, for example) upon reaching certain levels, making the skirmishes even more addictive. Shining Force II, also available on Virtual Console, continued the saga's winning ways.

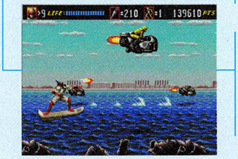


7/93

ECCO THE DOLPHIN

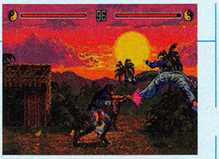
GENESIS
SEGA
ECCO THE DOLPHIN

Ecco the Dolphin proved that games free of violence and conflict could be compelling even for hardcore gamers. Indeed, with its brutally difficult puzzles and twitchy underwater controls, serious gamers were the only ones who stood a chance at guiding Ecco through a series of diabolical challenges in which a single mistake could leave you crushed or suffocating. Ecco looked, sounded, and played like no other game of its day, and its success inspired two sequels and an edutainment spin-off.



SHINOBI III: RETURN OF THE NINJA MASTER

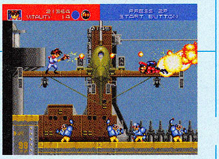
Is there anything more radical than a ninja on a surfboard throwing ninja stars so deadly that they make people explode upon getting hit? No. That's why Joe Musashi, star of the Shinobi series, is one of the premier ninjas in video gaming. Although Shinobi III isn't quite as beloved as its predecessor, The Revenge of Shinobi (which isn't available on Virtual Console as of this writing), Shinobi III is full of action and technique.



8/93

ETERNAL CHAMPIONS

Fighting games were all the rage in the early '90s, and while series such as Street Fighter and Mortal Kombat were available on multiple platforms, Sega decided to get in on the action with Eternal Champions, its own Genesis-exclusive entry in the genre. Though certainly not as refined as its competition, Eternal Champions featured some novel characters and unique (but nearly impossible-to-execute) stage-specific finishers.

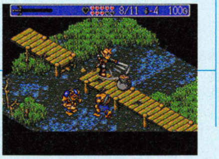


9/93

GUNSTAR HEROES

GENESIS
GUNSTAR HEROES
SEGA

The Genesis was especially renowned for its action games, and nobody delivers edge-of-your-seat thrills like acclaimed developer Treasure, which supported Sega exclusively in the 16-bit days. The game that put the studio on the map was Gunstar Heroes, a frenetic run-'n'-gun with awe-inspiring bosses, an ingenious weapon system, and genre-defining co-op play. And as much as we love Contra's Mad Dog and Scorpion, ol' Red and Blue here just might be the badder duo.



10/93

LANDSTALKER

Landstalker featured a revolutionary isometric perspective that instantly differentiated it from the other Zelda-inspired action-RPGs of the era. Although its 3-D graphics were created through visual trickery, Landstalker was among the first video games to feature actual three-dimensional gameplay. This allowed it to offer all sorts of unique puzzles that had never been attempted before, but navigation and jumping in Landstalker's faux-3D world often proved excruciatingly difficult. With its unique perspective, brain-teasing dungeons, and charming cast of characters, Landstalker offered several good reasons to endure its frustrations.

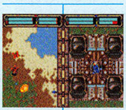
WAITING IN THE WINGS

A wide array of excellent Genesis games is available on Virtual Console, but there are many more yet to be tapped. Here are a few more system-defining games that we would love to see released on VC.

THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI

12/89

HERZOG ZWEI

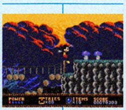


3/90

MICHAEL JACKSON'S MOONWALKER

8/90

CASTLE OF ILLUSION STARRING MICKEY MOUSE



11/90

STRIDER

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MORTAL KOMBAT

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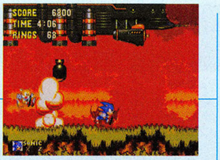
SONIC & KNUCKLES

10/94

1994

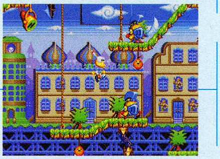
2/94



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3

Perhaps in part because it was released just a couple months after Sonic CD, the Blue Blur's third cartridge title couldn't keep up with the earth-shattering popularity of its predecessors. Yet while sales dipped to "only" about two million copies worldwide, Sonic the Hedgehog 3 proved another fantastic outing for Sega's mascot. Sonic Team continued to push the hardware to new heights, and the levels were significantly larger than those in previous installments, with lots of inventive set pieces. Later that year Sega released Sonic & Knuckles, and thanks to the introduction of "lock-on technology," players could combine the two cartridges to access all sorts of additional content—most notably, the ability to play as Knuckles in Sonic the Hedgehog 3.

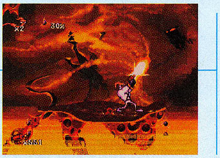
8/94



DYNAMITE HEADDY

Featuring gorgeous pastel graphics and a quirky puppet-show theme, Dynamite Headdy is another work of mad genius from the developers at Treasure. The game is literally about using your head—using it as a grappling hook, using it as a weapon, and exchanging it with other heads, each of which bestow new powers. The words *brilliant* and *bizarre* don't do it justice; it's a must-play for all action/platformer fans.

10/94



EARTHWORM JIM

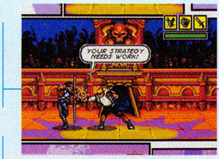
Though it was also released for the Super Nintendo, the bizarre and humorous Earthworm Jim was originally developed for the Genesis. Created by Douglas TenNapel and Shiny Entertainment, the game was one of the finest action-platformers of the 16-bit era. Its hilarious collection of bosses—including Professor Monkey-for-a-Head and Doc Duodenum—were brought to life with incredible animation, and Tommy Tallarico's quirky soundtrack fit like a glove. The game's success spawned a Marvel comic, a line of action figures, and a pretty solid animated series, in which Dan Castellaneta (best known for voicing Homer Simpson) provided the voice of Jim.

1995

COMIX ZONE

Comix Zone is another game that, while not great, exemplified the creative spark that made the Genesis so special. In this 2-D side-scroller, you played an artist who's been pulled into the pages of his own comic book, and the game had a presentation to match; you fought from panel to panel, and word balloons and written sound effects complemented the action.

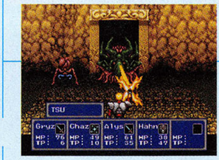
1/95



PHANTASY STAR IV: THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM

After the disappointing Phantasy Star III, the team behind PSII reunited to bring the Phantasy Star series to a pitch-perfect conclusion that tied up all of the previous plot threads and ended the landmark franchise at the top of its game. Its large cast of heroes perfectly captured the charm of the earlier installments, and its battle system broke new ground with advanced features like macros and combination attacks that were years ahead of its time. Sadly, its year-late release and $99 retail price left it overlooked by all but the most fanatical of Phantasy Star fans.

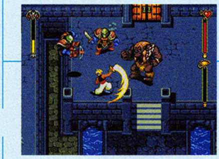
2/95



BEYOND OASIS

If Link exchanged his trademark tights for some billowy pantaloons, you'd get something a lot like Beyond Oasis. This top-down action-RPG was Sega's answer to The Legend of Zelda, mixing solid combat with some fantastic puzzle design centered around four elemental spirits. The game looks great, too, with bright, vibrant colors and fluid animation (especially on those pantaloons). Famed composer Yuzo Koshiro founded the development studio responsible for Beyond Oasis, and not only wrote the music for the game, but also served as producer.

3/95

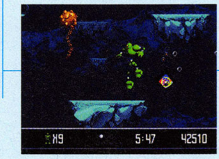


SEGA
GENESIS
VECTORMAN

VECTORMAN

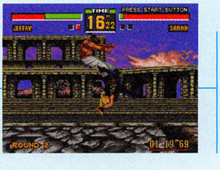
Though their gameplay isn't very similar, Vectorman often draws comparisons to Donkey Kong Country since both games featured prerendered CG graphics and both started new series fairly late in their respective consoles' life cycles. Vectorman is primarily a side-scrolling action game, but vehicle stages and the ability to change forms help this challenging title stand out from the crowd.

10/95



1996

11/96



VIRTUA FIGHTER 2

Virtua Fighter 2, quite honestly, was not a very good game. It was a 2-D adaptation of a 3-D fighting game, and the methodical gameplay didn't work so well in two dimensions. Nonetheless, it was a significant game in the life of the Genesis, as it demonstrated just how far the gaming industry had come since the system's launch. By this time, the Genesis's successor, the Sega Saturn, had been on the market for more than a year, and the 16-bit era was essentially at an end.

EVALUATION STATION

WIIWARE
VIRTUAL CONSOLE
DSIWARE

WIIWARE

5 SPOTS PARTY

PUBLISHER: **COSMONAUT GAMES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **500**

The premise of 5 Spots Party is pretty simple: you look at two pictures, and find the differences between them as fast as possible. It's completely competent, but hardly exciting stuff. Except, of course, when you throw in primates. The game's monkey mode (in which you find hidden monkeys, not differences between pictures) is strangely entertaining. Granted, that entertainment doesn't last, but monkey enthusiasts finally have the game they've been waiting for. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

WIIWARE

ANT NATION

PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
GENRE: **STRATEGY**
Wii POINTS: **700**

Though Ant Nation mimics the Pikmin titles by letting you build a large group of little soldiers, it doesn't come close to offering Pikmin's variety and open-ended gameplay. The 100 missions are doled out one at a time, making for a frustrating experience when you get stuck. Also, unlike Pikmin, the ants don't have specialties—just experience levels that you can build by crushing them, an action that is both sadistic and nonintuitive. —**GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

WIIWARE

Round 3 of 6
CPU

BATTLE POKER

PUBLISHER: **LEFT FIELD PRODUCTIONS**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
Wii POINTS: **800**

If you're looking for a poker game, look elsewhere. Battle Poker is a tile game that uses poker hands (pairs, three of a kind, etc.) for matching patterns on a five-by-five grid. In one variation you arrange the tiles in rows and columns. In the other you draw a path through poker hands. As a beginner, you have no chance of defeating the far-too-advanced CPU opponent, but a four-player match can be rousing fun. —**GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

WIIWARE

0000203440
COMB

BIT.TRIP CORE

PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES** · GENRE: **RHYTHM** · Wii POINTS: **600**

George S's Pick

If Bit.Trip Beat is a rhythm-based interpretation of Pong, think of its follow-up, Bit.Trip Core, as a variation on the classic shooter. As objects fly by, you blast them from a battery in the middle of the screen. Instead of the motion-based control of its predecessor, Core requires precise coordination between the Control Pad and the 2 Button. Your success depends on identifying patterns and hitting the buttons to the beat. As the game advances, the objects change directions midstream, making shooting patterns more complex. There's not much variety, but the game is still a solid play.

Recommended

WIIWARE

BIT BOY!!

PUBLISHER: **BPLUS**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **600**

I absolutely love Bit Boy!!'s concept—the idea of seeing a character and his game evolve through different eras of gaming technology right before your eyes is very appealing. Anyone who's actually experienced gaming's past firsthand will love the authenticity in the presentation and the in-jokes (such as the long load times during the 32-bit stages). The humor goes only so far, however, since the Pac-Man-influenced gameplay is pretty bland. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

WIIWARE

BUST-A-MOVE PLUS!

PUBLISHER: **TAITO**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **600**

As I mentioned in my review of Space Bust-A-Move for DS last month, the color-matching, bubble-bursting Bust-A-Move puzzle series is one of the best around. This version, while solid, doesn't offer anything new. Nonetheless, the reasonable price and decent selection of modes add up to a puzzler that's perfect for anyone who wants a low-risk way to sample the series. Bust-A-Move vets can pass, however. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

WIIWARE

Ruins of Ro
Remaining
Tongarry
Floor 1 has been dessstroyed!

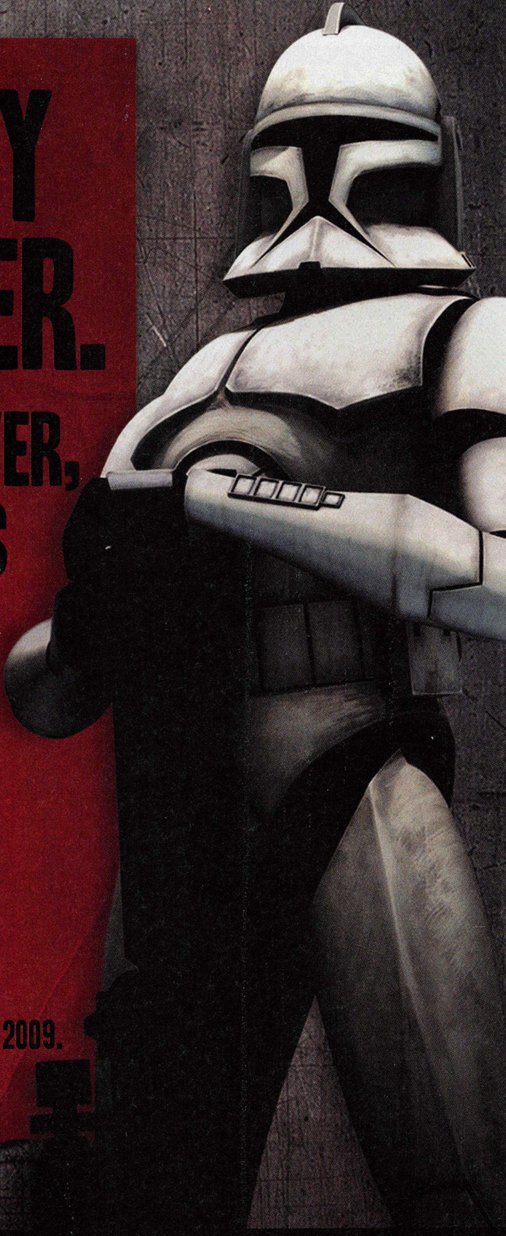
FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: MY LIFE AS A DARKLORD

PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX** · GENRE: **STRATEGY** · NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **1,000**

Phil T's Pick

In a humorous twist, this sequel to My Life as a King has you playing as the bad guy. Namely, you control Mira, the daughter of the evil Darklord from the previous title. In this (quite literal) tower-defense game, you must prevent legions of pesky adventurers from reaching the top of Mira's tower by adding floors and populating them with monsters before the so-called heroes arrive. The gameplay is rather deep—there is a great deal of strategy involved in placing the proper types of floors and classes of creature in your tower to counter the invading forces. A victory earned after properly upgrading and distributing your troops is extremely rewarding. This charming and challenging game definitely lives up to the standards set by its predecessor.

Recommended



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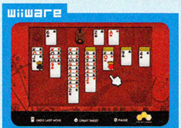
EVALUATION STATION

WiiWare



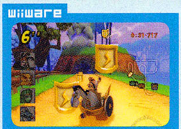
HB ARCADE CARDS

PUBLISHER: **HB STUDIOS**
GENRE: **CARD GAME**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Though it's not an arcade game as the title suggests, HB Studios's first WiiWare effort does deal in classic gaming. The package offers solitaire and single-player versions of canasta, euchre, cribbage, rummy, and hearts, each with smart, no-nonsense design and a basic tutorial. The games aren't big on strategy, and CPU-controlled opponents play by the book, so if you're dealt a strong hand, you'll likely come out on top. —**GEORGE S.**

Recommended

WiiWare



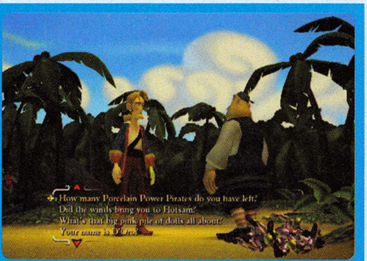
HERACLES CHARIOT RACING

PUBLISHER: **NEKO ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **RACING**
Wii POINTS: **800**

Heracles Chariot Racing can be summed up best as a budget version of Mario Kart Wii. (Obviously, instead of the charming Mario characters, you get racers inspired by Greek mythology.) It's not a bad game—though it is rather basic—but because it feels like it's trying so hard to be Mario Kart (there's even a four-player Battle mode), you can't help but compare the two, making Heracles Chariot Racing seem all the more inferior. —**JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



How many Porcelain Power Pirates do you have left?
Did the winds bring you to Flotsam?
What's that big pink pile of dolls all about?
Your name is D'Oro!

TALES OF MONKEY ISLAND CHAPTER 1: LAUNCH OF THE SCREAMING NARWHAL

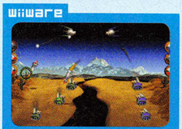
PUBLISHER: **TELLTALE GAMES** › GENRE: **ADVENTURE** › WII POINTS: **1,000**

George S's Pick

Pirates have taken a back seat to zombies and vampires in pop culture these days, but that hasn't stopped Telltale Games from reviving LucasArts's swashbuckling point-and-click classic Monkey Island for a Strong Bad-style five-part serial. Chapter 1 takes series star Guybrush Threepwood to Flotsam Island, where the populace is starving for piratey activity. The puzzles are more straightforward than they were in the old days, though not giveaways by any means. The banter is sharp and chuckleworthy, with a few groaners in the mix. The action sometimes stutters when the pointer wanders to the edge of the screen and the dialogue is compressed to the point of distortion, but if those issues are smoothed out for future episodes, Monkey Island just might help pirates reclaim the spotlight.

Recommended

WiiWare



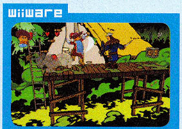
INCOMING!

PUBLISHER: **JV GAMES**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Even at 500 Wii Points, Incoming! is overpriced. This judgment is not based solely on the game's lackluster graphics and presentation, but also on its gameplay. You hold A over your tank and drag the remote to determine the general direction and power of your projectiles—annoyingly, you move your tank using these same controls. And by the time the defense satellites, rockets, and power-ups come into play, you end up relying more on luck than strategy. —**JUSTIN C.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



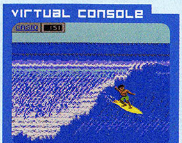
THE THREE MUSKETEERS: ONE FOR ALL!

PUBLISHER: **LEGENDO ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **900**

This title starts off with a promising comic-book-style intro inspired by French comic *Asterix*, but as soon as you begin playing, things go downhill. The main character's limited attack range mixed with spotty motion controls make the game more frustrating than fun. The ugly graphics, with black foreground objects that block your view, don't help. —**PHIL T.**

Grumble Grumble

Virtual Console



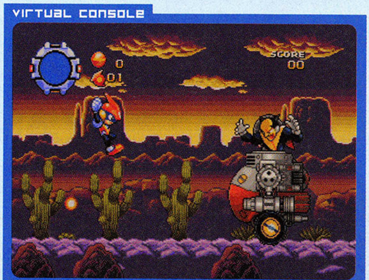
CALIFORNIA GAMES

PLATFORM: **COMMODORE 64**
PUBLISHER: **EPYX/COMMODORE GAMING**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1987**

California Games features six totally tubular events: surfing, half-pipe, roller skating, BMX, flying disc, and foot bag. Although the games are enjoyable, the limited number of events means your fun is fleeting. After mastering the different challenges (which shouldn't take long), there is little left to do except alternate play with a buddy in order to top each other's high scores. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

Virtual Console



PULSEMAN

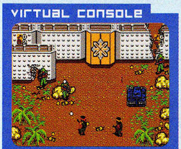
PLATFORM: **SEGA GENESIS** › PUBLISHER: **SEGA/GAME FREAK**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER** › ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1994**

Phil T's Pick

Released at retail only in Japan and with a limited US run on the Sega Channel, Pulseman is finally getting the chance to reach a wider audience. This sadly overlooked platformer (from the makers of Pokémon, no less) is one of the finest games available for the Genesis. It sports great level design, fun electricity-based mechanics, well-animated characters, terrific graphics, and a catchy soundtrack. Don't miss out on this one.

Recommended

virtual console



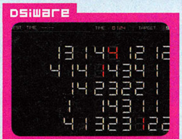
SECRET COMMANDO

PLATFORM: **MASTER SYSTEM**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1986**

Secret Commando was originally released as a Rambo game, but I can guess why it was changed—probably because Sylvester Stallone was tired of seeing his character killed over and over again by faceless enemy troops. This top-down shooter isn't bad, but it's very difficult; your bullets have limited range, and the lack of continues in single-player mode will faze all but the toughest freedom fighters. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

dsiware



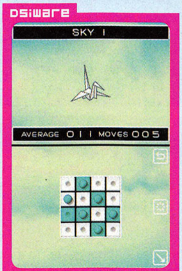
ART STYLE: BASE 10

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Thus far, the Art Style games' trademark has been pick-up-and-play accessibility, but that's not the case with Base 10. The problem with this puzzler is that its primary play mechanic involves moving numbers around the playfield, but most movements render the numbers unusable. It's a strange oversight that makes you feel like your success depends on luck as much as skill. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

dsiware



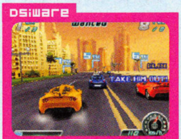
ART STYLE: ZENGAGE

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Playing like an enhanced version of those sliding-tile puzzles, Zengage isn't the most innovative of the Art Style offerings. There are a lot of stages and the challenge level is high, but the mechanics are somewhat dull. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

dsiware



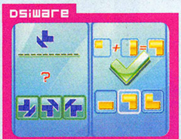
ASPHALT 4: ELITE RACING

PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT**
GENRE: **RACING**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

One might think that a DSiWare racing game would be lacking in features, but that definitely isn't the case here. Asphalt 4 is fully loaded with tracks, race types, and licensed vehicles. The 3-D graphics are impressive, and there are plenty of customization options for your cars. Just use the Control Pad instead of the ineffective touch screen. Too bad the multiplayer mode doesn't support online play. —PHIL T.

Recommended

dsiware



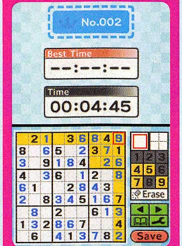
BRAIN CHALLENGE

PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT**
GENRE: **BRAIN TRAINING**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

This DSiWare port of Brain Challenge shares many features with the DS version that was released a year and a half ago. Still, its "short burst" style of gameplay makes it a good title to have ready to load up at all times. With nearly 50 mind-bending challenges to choose from, there is a lot of variety, but the game ends up feeling derivative of the countless other brain-training titles out there. Those numerous exercises get old quick. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

dsiware



SUDOKU STUDENT

PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Sudoku Student is a 50-level beginners' version of Sudoku Master (released for DSiWare in June). Its gameplay is just as solid as that of Sudoku Master, but it's hard to justify purchasing a glorified tutorial that should have been a mode in a previous release. —CHRIS H.

Grumble Grumble

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True Hearts

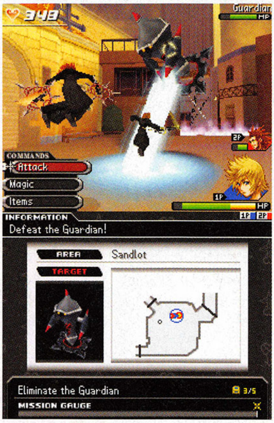
> KINGDOM HEARTS 358/2 DAYS

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **H.A.N.D./SQUARE ENIX**
RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2009**

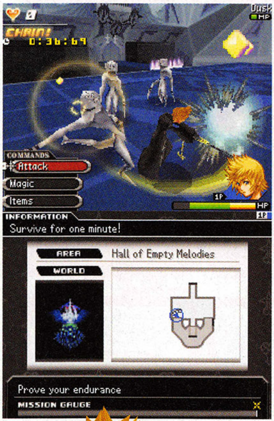
As big fans of the Kingdom Hearts franchise, we jumped at the chance to play deeper into Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days—after all, this game helps bridge the gap between Kingdom Hearts and Kingdom Hearts II (both for PlayStation 2), revealing more about the origins and members of Organization XIII through the eyes of Roxas, Sora's Nobody. (For the uninitiated, a Nobody is a being without a heart; Roxas was created when Sora sacrificed his own heart to save his friend Kairi.) Unlike the other Nobodies of Organization XIII, Roxas is pretty much a blank slate—all he knows is that he's the only one who can wield a Keyblade and release and collect hearts from the Heartless. Because of this, he is integral to Organization XIII's goal of releasing Kingdom Hearts, the source of all hearts that's supposed to make the Nobodies complete.

Instead of playing through one continuous narrative, 358/2 Days is broken up into short missions, which are ideal for a handheld title such as this. In the Grey Area hub world (Organization XIII's headquarters), a fellow Nobody named Saïx gives you assignments that vary from collecting a certain number of hearts to exploring a new area. (You can't explore an entire world, though—electric barriers limit you to certain regions.)

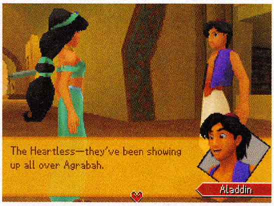
Although you spend the first few hours of the game running errands in Twilight Town, you do make your way to Disney worlds eventually. One assignment has you traveling to Aladdin's hometown of Agrabah with your buddy Axel. In a place like this, it wouldn't be surprising to see the likes of Aladdin or Jasmine; however, Roxas and Axel spot Pete (Mickey and Goofy's nemesis) instead. The two Nobodies hear that Pete's looking for a genie's lamp, so they decide to follow him covertly, Metal Gear Solid-style. You see Pete's cone of vision in red on the ground; you have to avoid stepping into that zone, or he'll spot you. At the same time, you have to keep Pete in your own blue cone of vision, or you'll lose him. Because you control Roxas with the Control Pad, it can be difficult to make minute adjustments as you're following Pete (fortunately, you're locked onto him, so you don't have to fuss with the camera), but this mission provides a welcome change of pace. —**JUSTIN C.**



INFORMATION
Defeat the Guardian!
AREA Sandlot
TARGET
Eliminate the Guardian 3/5
MISSION GAUGE



INFORMATION
Survive for one minute!
AREA Hall of Empty Melodies
WORLD
Prove your endurance
MISSION GAUGE


The Heartless—they've been showing up all over Agrabah.
Aladdin

91
CHAIN!
Dire Plant
HP
2P
COMMANDS
Attack
Magic
Items
1P
HP

258
COMMANDS
Examine
Magic
Items
1P
HP

Both of you, finish your preparations ASAP. A giant Heartless has surfaced. It must be exterminated today.
Saïx

Thrills and Chills

>MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

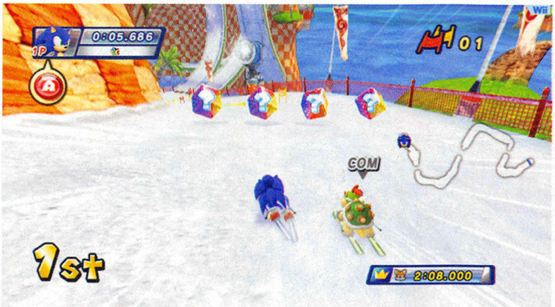
PLATFORM: **Wii, NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SEGA** • RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2009**

Mario and Sonic the Hedgehog might not be vying for total supremacy of the gaming universe like they were in years gone by, but their competitive spirit may never die. Perhaps that's why the video game icons—and some of their closest friends—are strapping on their skis, skates, and snowboards for some frigid fun in Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games for the Wii console and the Nintendo DS handheld.

With 27 events and 20 characters—including Olympic newcomers Donkey Kong, Bowser Jr., Metal Sonic, and Silver—at your disposal, there's plenty of excitement to be had in the Wii version of the game. We'd already seen events such as speed skating, downhill skiing, and bobsleigh when Sega announced the title a few months back, but the publisher recently revealed additional events, including the trick-oriented snowboard half-pipe and four-on-four ice hockey. Each event takes advantage of the Wii controls in different ways; in figure skating, for example, you flick, spin, or balance the Wii Remote controller to perform tricks at various hotspots. Many events also give you the option of using the Wii Balance Board accessory, such as skeleton races, in which you sit (or lie) on the balance board and shift your weight to steer and attempt to stay on the best racing line.

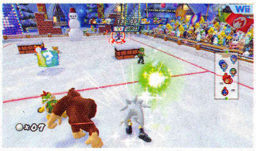
In addition to the aforementioned realistic events (well, as realistic as it gets when plumbers and assorted mammals are the athletes), the game offers several fantastical "dream" events, such as dream alpine skiing, dream ski cross, and dream snowboard cross, in which you race in Mario- or Sonic-themed worlds—complete with Mario Kart-style items, and obstacles, such as robots, hampering your progress. Another "dream" event that definitely isn't in the Olympics is the snowball fight, in which teams of four toss snowballs at each other to rack up points.

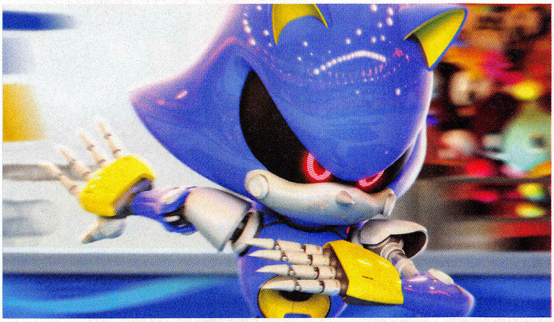
The DS game offers a similar mix of realistic and fantasy events, but, naturally, it utilizes the touch screen or traditional button inputs instead of gestures. The DS version of figure skating, for instance, allows you to guide your character along a path of icons using the stylus, then slide, spin, or tap the stylus to execute actions. Perhaps the most exciting part of the DS game, however, is its Adventure Tour mode. In this mode, you'll control Mario and Sonic as you attempt to rescue the Snow Spirits that have been captured by Bowser and Eggman. Along the way, you'll face off against other competitors and recruit them to your team, enabling you to use their abilities (each character has different stats) against challenging bosses. —**CHRIS H.**



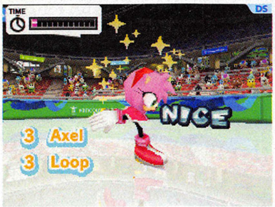
Wii
2:29.596
COM
2nd
2:20.000

[Below] Let's hope for gorilla-initiated snowball fights in the next real Winter Olympics.





DS
Dream Island
Sparkleton



DS
3rd
125 km/h
COM3
COM1
P1
R
00:25.264

Expanded Horizons

>POKÉMON MYSTERY DUNGEON: EXPLORERS OF SKY

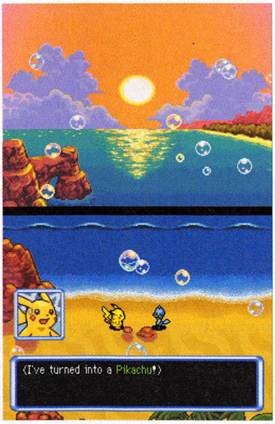
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **CHUNSOFT** • RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2009**

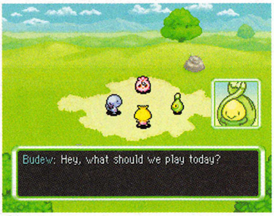
PREVIEW
OCTOBER '09

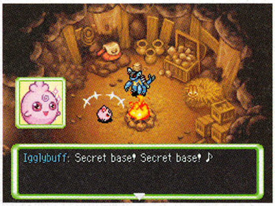
A year has passed since the US release of Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time and Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness, so fans are likely itching to get their hands on the latest PMD—Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky. They won't have long to wait as the release date is set for October 12th. Explorers of Sky is similar to Pokémon Platinum Version in that it's an upgrade from its predecessors that includes some new content while retaining much from the initial titles. And as we learned with the superb Platinum, there's something to be said for return visits.

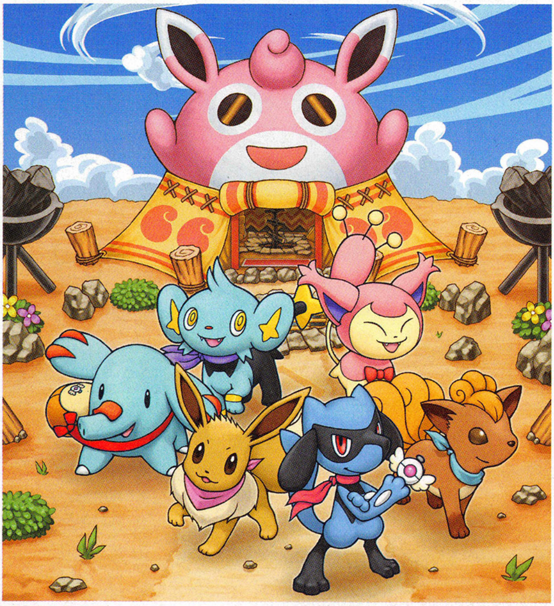
For those of you who aren't familiar with the series, here's a brief recap: you begin the game by answering some questions and then being transformed into a Pokémon. You'll meet and actually talk to other Pokémon, join an Exploration Team and go on quests with a partner Pokémon, collect and buy items, visits shops, and even bring criminals to justice, all while saving the world from a nefarious plot. Unlike traditional Pokémon RPGs, Chunsoft's creation is a true dungeon crawl with randomly generated maps and a high price to pay for losing a battle—half your collected wealth! That may seem harsh, but the game offers up a nifty option to be rescued from your cruel fate by a friend via a wireless connection. Of course, the buddy system works only if your friend has a copy of the game. Like heads, two copies of Explorers of Sky are better than one.

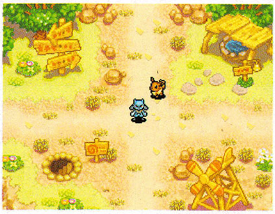
So what's new? Explorers of Sky's Special Episodes are almost like separate games; you don't even access them from within the regular adventure, but rather from the main menu. The second shock is that you won't play as your Pokémon character, but instead as one of the supporting Pokémon cast, such as Guildmaster Wigglytuff in a flashback story to when it was an Igglybuff. In the Special Episode entitled Igglybuff the Prodigy, you'll direct Igglybuff's exploration of the Murky Forest while also uncovering the Pokémon's unique story. With their rich character development and challenging dungeons, the Special Episodes are a compelling enough reason to check this game out if you've played Explorers of Time or Explorers of Darkness. And if you've not played the two previous titles, you're in luck: Explorers of Sky is by far the best of the three, boasting expanded content, surprise revelations, and improved communications features that add to the ease of trading items and rescuing friends. **—SCOTT P.**

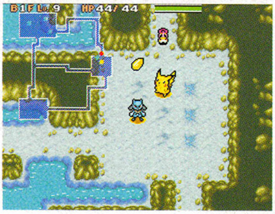

(I've turned into a Pikachu!)

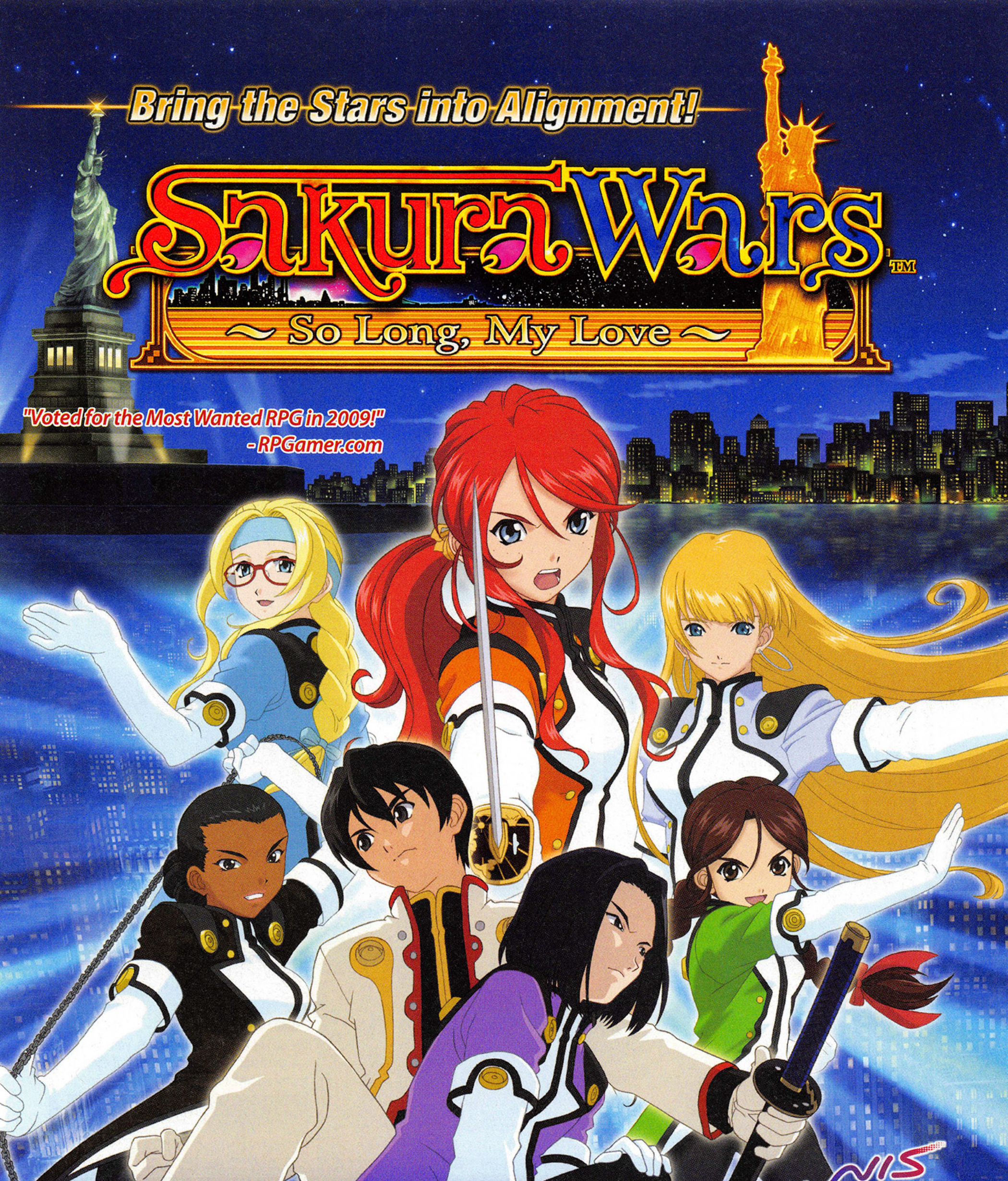

Budew: Hey, what should we play today?


Igglybuff: Secret base! Secret base! ♪








Bring the Stars into Alignment!
Sakura Wars™
~ So Long, My Love ~
"Voted for the Most Wanted RPG in 2009!"
- RPGamer.com
NIS America
www.NISAmerica.com

RATING PENDING

RP

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

May contain content inappropriate for children. Visit www.esrb.org for rating information.

PS2

PlayStation 2

Wii™

Available Winter 2009

www.sakurawars.us

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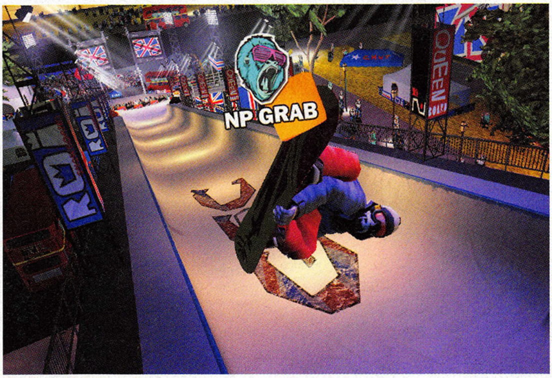
Speed the World

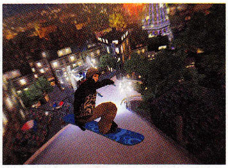
>SHAUN WHITE SNOWBOARDING: WORLD STAGE

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTREAL**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2009**

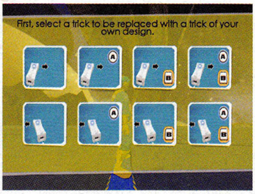
The Flying Tomato is set to take the world stage in Ubisoft's Wii Balance Board-compatible sequel, now with a Wii MotionPlus option. As the crew from Road Trip goes pro and embarks on a round-the-globe snowboarding tour, it takes on new members and 75 challenges on eight mountains. There's urban snowboarding, too, in locations as unlikely as a half-pipe in Times Square and the streets of San Francisco. A new season-competition calendar keeps you on track for world domination, leading up to elite competitions in France, Canada, and Japan. If your Wii Remote is equipped with the Wii MotionPlus accessory, you can create up to eight of your own moves between events using the Trick-O-Matic at an arcade in the game's airport hub. By turning or twisting the remote, you dictate how the board will animate with 1:1 accuracy, down to the exact timing. If your dream trick calls for grabs, you can pull them off by pressing the A and B Buttons. Name the trick, choose an icon, then hit the slopes. Each custom move replaces a built-in one, and adopts the old maneuver's controls and score. You can demonstrate your new moves in the Campaign mode or in multiplayer events for up to four players. If you've achieved a high score that you're happy with, you can share it with the rest of the world by uploading it to the online leaderboard. —**GEORGE S.**



[Above] It's the ever-popular NP grab! This maneuver is sure to go over big with the judges.



[Below] As this image illustrates, you can assign custom-made moves to any of eight gesture-and-button control combos.



First, select a trick to be replaced with a trick of your own design.

The Defense Rests

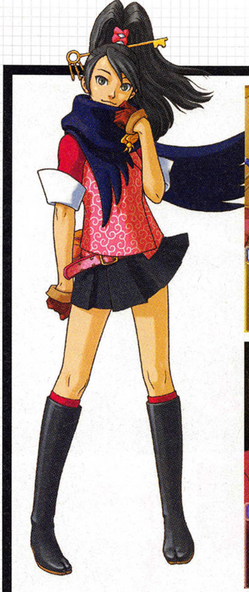
> ACE ATTORNEY INVESTIGATIONS: MILES EDGEWORTH

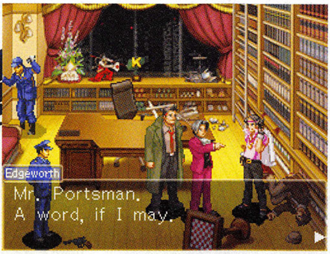
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM** • RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2010**

Defense attorney Phoenix Wright is out and his rival, prosecutor Miles Edgeworth, is in in the latest entry in Capcom's Ace Attorney series. To match the change in main character are changes in gameplay; Ace Attorney Investigations lets you actually move the protagonist around 2-D environments as you examine evidence, talk to witnesses, and search for clues. You can also talk to a partner character if you need a nudge in the right direction; in the first case it's series detective Dick Gumshoe, but later cases see Edgeworth teaming up with cheerful ninja-girl Kay Faraday.

An even more significant addition, however, is the game's Logic mode. As you learn facts about the case, you'll be able to make connections between pieces of information and draw conclusions to help advance the case. After going hands-on with an English version of the game, we can safely say Logic mode adds a new layer of depth and freedom to the proceedings.

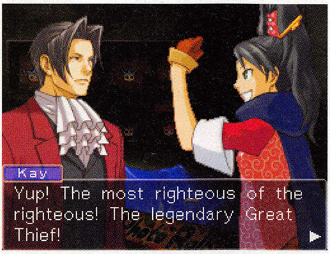
Despite the changes to the formula, you'll find plenty of the addictive gameplay of past Ace Attorney titles, such as listening to testimonies, cross-examining suspects, and pointing out contradictions (albeit not in court). Fans can expect the return of numerous familiar characters, too, including former policewoman Maggey Byrde and up-and-coming forensics expert Ema Skye. —**CHRIS H.**





Edgeworth

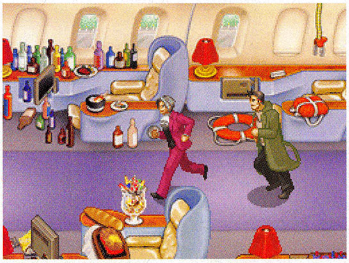
Mr. Portsman.
A word, if I may.

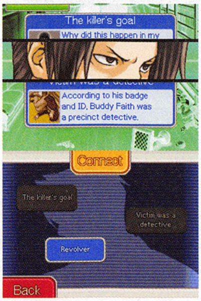


Kay

Yup! The most righteous of the righteous! The legendary Great Thief!

[Below] Edgeworth is clearly preparing to face off against Little Mac in a "who-looks-better-in-pink" jogging contest.





The killer's goal

Why did this happen in my

According to his badge and ID, Buddy Faith was a precinct detective.

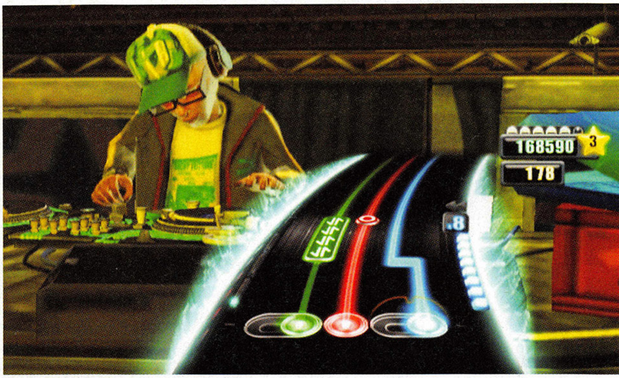
Mix and Mash

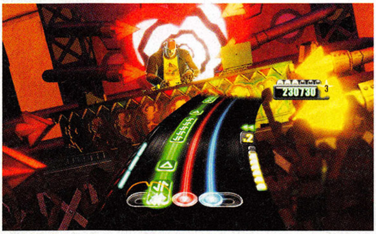
> DJ HERO

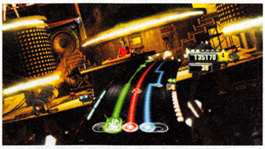
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **FREESTYLE GAMES**
RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2009**

We didn't know a lick about DJing before we got our hands on DJ Hero, but we soon discovered that didn't matter much; this title really is for any rhythm-game fan, aspiring DJ or not. In the tutorial, the renowned Grandmaster Flash gives you the basics: tap the buttons as their respective notes cascade down the screen, scratching the turntable controller's platter and switching tracks left or right by flipping the crossfader accordingly as you the see the changes coming down the note highway. If you perform well during certain portions of mixes, you fill up the Euphoria meter (think Star Power in Guitar Hero) and then press a button on the controller to engage it. Additionally, playing well will allow you to use Rewind, a power that allows you to reverse the mix to a previous section—by rotating the platter counterclockwise—and play it over again. It all looks and sounds complicated at first, but we quickly started jamming to hits such as Vanilla Ice's "Ice Ice Baby" vs. MC Hammer's "U Can't Touch This." With more than 80 mixes (by DJ Shadow, DJ AM, DJ Z-Trip, DJ Jazzy Jeff, and more) and over 100 licensed tracks in all, there's bound to be something for everyone—even the staunchest of Guitar Hero players, as some mixes can be played using both the Guitar Hero and DJ Hero peripherals (Motörhead's "Ace of Spades" vs. Noisia's "Groundhog," for example). Speaking of multiplayer, up to two people can play DJ Hero together, either off- or online. —**JUSTIN C.**

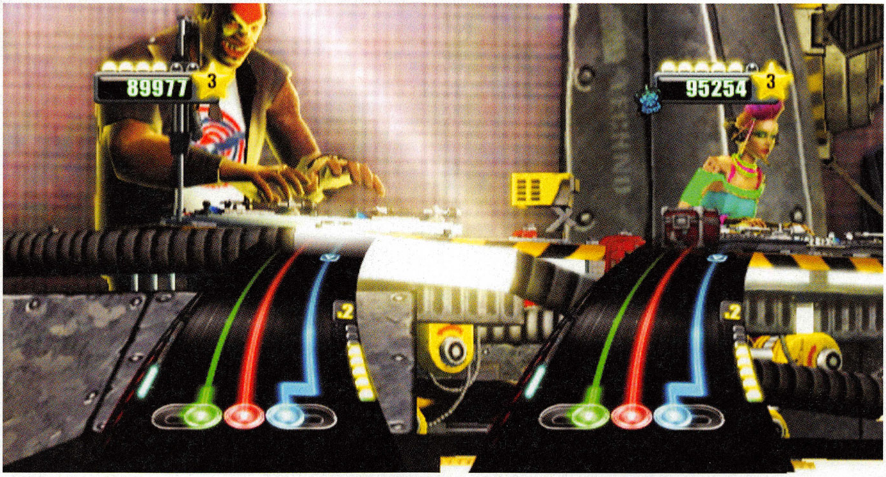
PREVIEW
OCTOBER '09

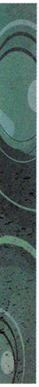






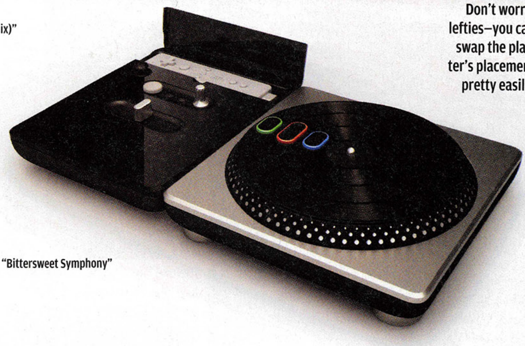
[Above] The arrows in the green track tell you which direction you should scratch. Don't let go of the platter in the process!



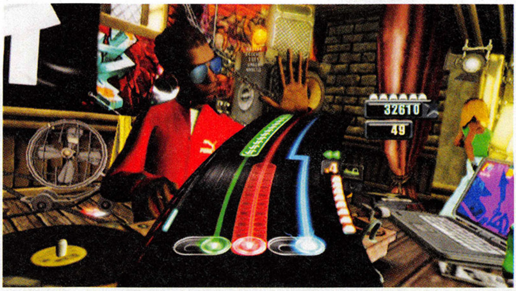


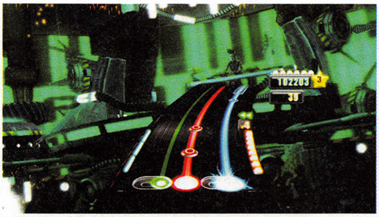
The MIXES (THUS FAR)

50 CENT "Disco Inferno" vs. INDEEP "Last Night a DJ Saved My Life"
BLONDIE "Atomic" vs. GORILLAZ "Feel Good Inc."
CYPRESS HILL "Insane in the Brain" vs. DAVID MCCALLUM "The Edge"
DAVID BOWIE "Let's Dance" vs. MARVIN GAYE "I Heard It through the Grapevine"
GWEN STEFANI "Hollaback Girl" vs. GORILLAZ "Feel Good Inc."
JAY Z "Excuse Me Miss" vs. RICK JAMES "Give It To Me Baby"
JURASSIC 5 "Jayou" vs. BILLY SQUIER "Big Beat"
M.I.A. "Paper Planes" vs. WALE "Lookin' at Me"
TEARS FOR FEARS "Shout" vs. DJ SHADOW, FEAT. MOS DEF "Six Days (Remix)"
THE KILLERS "Somebody Told Me" vs. ERIC PRYDZ "Pjanoo (Radio Edit)"
VANILLA ICE "Ice Ice Baby" vs. MC HAMMER "U Can't Touch This"
MOTÖRHEAD "Ace of Spades" vs. NOISIA "Groundhog"
DAVID BOWIE "Let's Dance" vs. KRS-1 "Jack of Spades"
ZOMBIES "Time of the Season" vs. CHUCK BROWN "Bustin' Loose"
BEASTIE BOYS "Intergalactic" vs. BEL BIV DEVOE "Poison"
GWEN STEFANI "Hollaback Girl" vs. INDEEP "Last Night a DJ Saved My Life"
PUBLIC ENEMY "Bring The Noize (20XX)" vs. JUSTICE "Genesis"
FOREIGNER "Juke Box Hero" vs. Z-TRIP "DJ Hero"
GRANDMASTER FLASH "Here Comes My DJ" vs. GARY NUMAN "Cars"
HERBIE HANCOCK "Rockit" vs. N.E.R.D. "Lapdance"
GRANDMASTER FLASH "Boom" vs. GRANDMASTER FLASH "Tap"
LL COOL J "Rock the Bells" vs. THE ARANBEE POP SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA "Bittersweet Symphony"
TEARS FOR FEARS "Shout" vs. ERIC B. & RAKIM "Eric B for President"
BLACK EYED PEAS "Boom Boom Pow" vs. BENNY BENASSI "Satisfaction"
DIZZEE RASCAL "Fix Up, Look Sharp" vs. JUSTICE "Genesis"
GWEN STEFANI "Hollaback Girl" vs. RICK JAMES "Give It to Me Baby"
JURASSIC 5 "Jayou" vs. HERBIE HANCOCK "Rockit"
MARVIN GAYE "I Heard It through the Grapevine" vs. GORILLAZ "Feel Good Inc."
TEARS FOR FEARS "Shout" vs. ERIC PRYDZ "Pjanoo (Radio Edit)"
BEASTIE BOYS "Sabotage" vs. FOO FIGHTERS "Monkey Wrench"



Don't worry, lefties—you can swap the platter's placement pretty easily.





A Line in the Sand

>SANDS OF DESTRUCTION

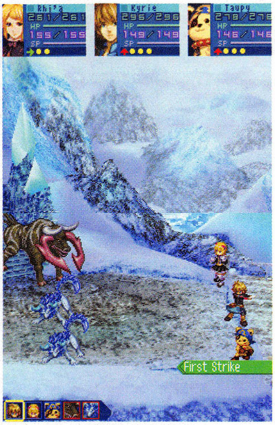
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **IMAGEEPOCH** • RELEASE: **JANUARY 2010**

Sega has been taking its sweet time with the Sands of Destruction localization, but at least they haven't let the delay go to waste. Our English preview version of the game is not only entertainingly translated and skillfully voiced, but is significantly more polished than the game's original 2008 Japanese release. "Our priority for the Japanese version was just trying to get the game out on time," admits ImageEpoch president Ryoei Mikage. "For the foreign version, our goal is to really raise the quality." And so ImageEpoch has heeded the feedback from Japanese customers and made several major changes, slashing the overly high random-encounter rate, smoothing out the choppy difficulty curve, and rebalancing each character's primary attacks.

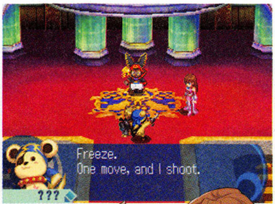
The delay has also given Funimation time to secure the rights to Japan's *Sands of Destruction* animated TV series, and to localize it for release alongside the game. The anime and game star the same cast of characters while having events unfold in completely different ways. But both narratives do share the same hook; instead of trying to save the world from some deadly peril, the heroes have judged their world to be so flawed that it is unworthy of rescue. So they're searching for a way to destroy it completely, and believe they've stumbled upon a means to this end with naive young Kyrie, who somehow obliterated an entire castle when attempting to escape from a group of armed guards.

All of humanity has been enslaved by a race of half-beast, half-man creatures called Ferals, but Kyrie has led a sheltered life in the care of a kindly Feral whom he regards as an uncle. So Morte, a fetching young terrorist with a passion for mass annihilation, sets off to show him the horrors of the world and inspire him to end it all. The story sounds like a recipe for nonstop tragedy and pathos, but Sands of Destruction somehow manages to maintain a lighthearted and comedic tone. Morte is a completely loveable psycho, and the Feral slavemasters are hard to take seriously, ranging from bunny-headed beastlords to a husky-voiced, hard-as-nails bounty hunter that looks just like a teddy bear.

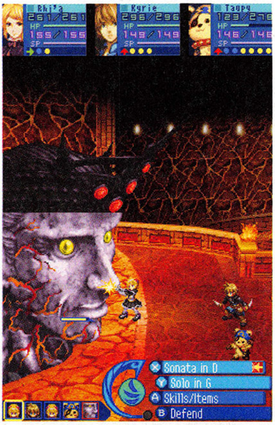
Sands of Destruction plays like a conventional turn-based RPG, but its bizarre narrative and loveable cast have left us thoroughly intrigued. Let's hope its release date sticks this time. —**CASEY L.**


Rhi'a
261/261
HP 155/155
SP
Kyrie
296/296
HP 149/149
SP
Taupy
278/278
HP 146/146
SP
First Strike

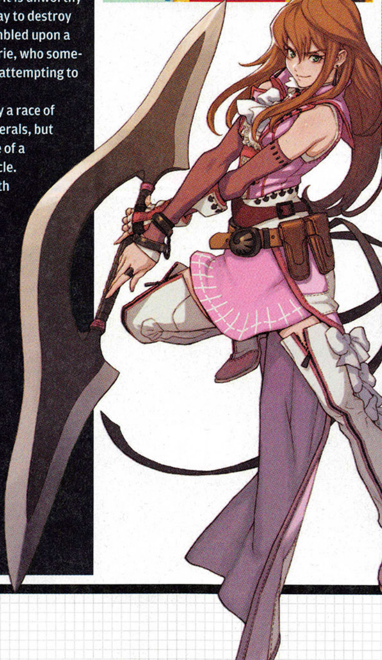
[Below] There are few things in life as terrifying as a heavily armed teddy bear.

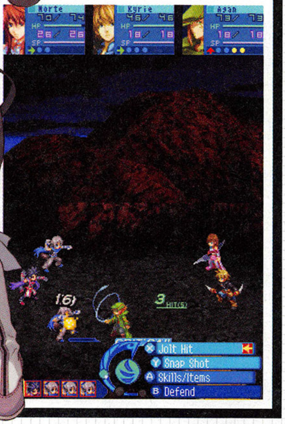

Freeze.
One move, and I shoot.

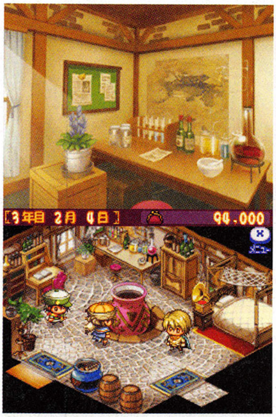
This place is amazing...

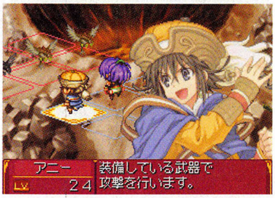

Rhi'a
261/261
HP 155/155
SP
Kyrie
296/296
HP 149/149
SP
Taupy
123/278
HP 146/146
SP
Sonata in D
Solo in G
Skills/Items
Defend

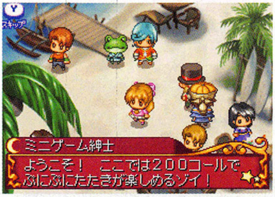
Work your magic.
Destroy the world!



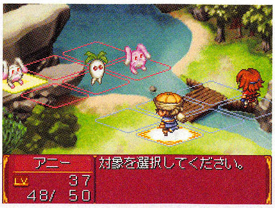

Morte
70/74
HP 26/26
SP
Kyrie
46/46
HP 18/18
SP
Agan
73/73
HP 18/18
SP
3 HIT(S)
Jolt Hit
Snap Shot
Skills/Items
Defend



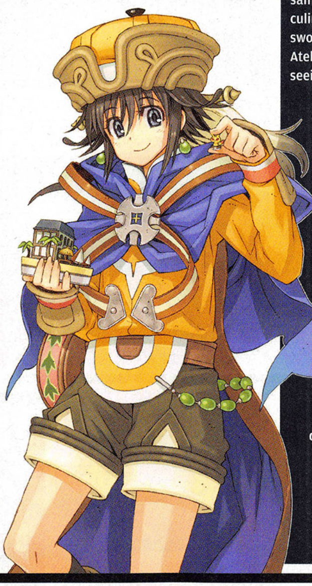

アニー LV 24
装備している武器で攻撃を行います。



ミニゲーム紳士
ようこそ！ ここでは200コールでぷにぷにたたきが楽しめるゾイ！


アニー LV 37 48/ 50
対象を選択してください。

[Above] Annie the alchemist fights some interesting enemies—like cute, fluffy bunny things.



In the Mix

>ATELIER ANNIE: ALCHEMISTS OF SERA ISLAND

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **NIS AMERICA**
DEVELOPER: **GUST** • RELEASE: **FALL 2009**

Although alchemy and cookery aren't quite the same thing, this might be the closest thing to a culinary RPG the DS will ever see. In between all the swords and sorcery and classic fantasy trappings, Atelier Annie is about throwing stuff in a pot and seeing what comes out.

Boiled down to the basics, alchemy is the art of making something out of something else. That's most of what you'll do in this game—scour the land gathering simple ingredients and then stew them together into hundreds of useful new items, from weapons and armor to delicious desserts. There's a lot more going on in the background, though. In between lessons in the alchemist's craft, our heroine has to recruit a party of allies, battle hordes of monsters, operate her own item shop, and even find time to pitch in and help build up the local tourist attractions. Imagine a touch of SimCity leaking into the middle of a collision between Dragon Quest and Cooking Mama.

NIS's North American version isn't quite finished yet, but there's already wit and personality to burn in the English dialogue, and Gust has never failed to make a game that's fun to look at. If you're after a different kind of RPG this fall, Annie's atelier might be worth a visit.

—DAVID S.

Posse in Effect

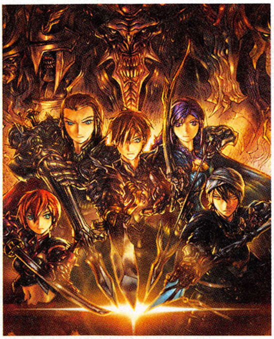
>HERO'S SAGA: LAEVATEIN TACTICS

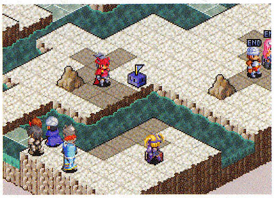
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **ALTAIR** • RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2009**

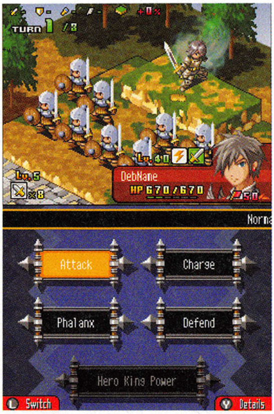
At first glance, Hero's Saga looks almost exactly like Final Fantasy Tactics—lots of stumpy-bodied little warriors on a grid-based 3-D battlefield. Luckily, that's not all there is to it. None of those warriors has to fight alone. Instead, each hero commands a small unit of soldiers backing him up, which adds new layers of depth whenever the munchkins take a swing at each other.

Each confrontation between units breaks down into three rounds of combat, where you can choose different attacks and formations to gain an edge on an opponent. Terrain conditions and elemental weapons also determine who gets the upper hand—to their credit, the game's interface designers found some neat ways to summarize those effects, making it easy to keep all the numbers and modifiers straight.

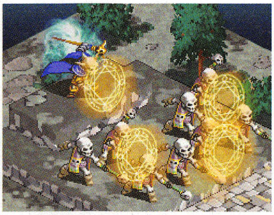
Paying close attention to the numbers isn't optional. There's a long and challenging quest here, and even the earliest battles don't offer much leeway. Die-hard strategy fans, of course, probably wouldn't have it any other way. **—DAVID S.**







[Below] Swordsmen, spearmen, archers, and the like are the troops you'll encounter most, but some generals muster more-exotic soldiers.

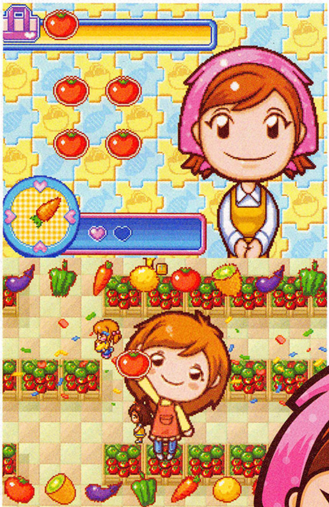


Third Course

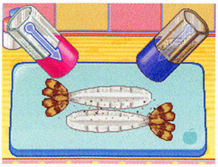
>COOKING MAMA 3

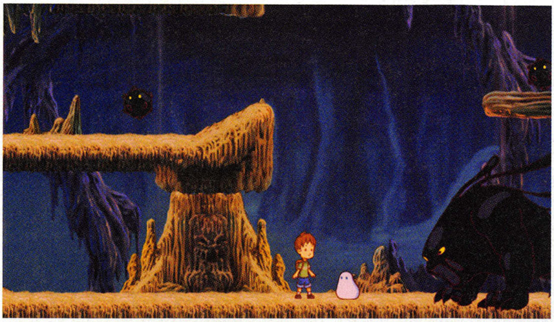
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **COOKING MAMA LTD.**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2009**

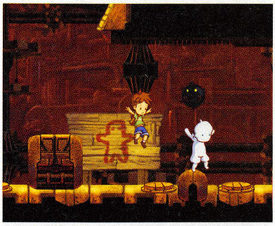
Always eager to sate the ravenous appetites of gamers, Majesco's kerchief-wearing Mama is returning to the kitchen in Cooking Mama 3 for DS. Sticking to the successful touch-screen-based minigame formula that has made previous entries in the series a hit, Cooking Mama 3 once again allows you to chop, grate, peel, pour, fry, grill, slice, and blend—more than 200 activities in all—as you prepare 80 all-new recipes from around the world, including heart-shaped marshmallows, pumpkin gnocchi, eggs Benedict, and chili con carne. Though the gameplay remains true to its roots, it does feature new inclusions, such as a Let's Shop mode that allows you to acquire ingredients from the store, and a Combine and Create mode that lets you modify recipes on the fly by mixing ingredients in new and innovative ways. Additionally, the game takes a page from Cooking Mama World Kitchen for Wii and gives you the chance to prevent mistakes-in-progress via extra minigames in which Mama swoops in to save the day. Additional modes—including a speed-based multiplayer contest—are also on the menu. **—CHRIS H.**

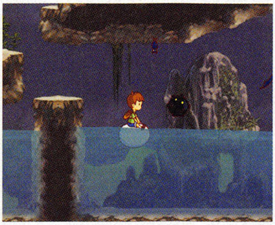


Considering Mama's gardening skills, you'd think she could just grow her own ingredients. Instead, you'll obtain them in the new Let's Shop mode.







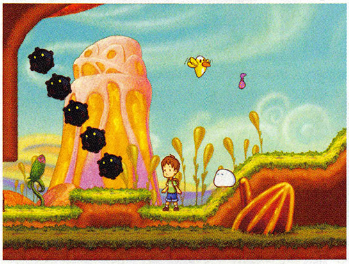


Transform and Blob Out

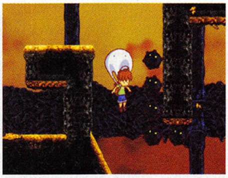
> A BOY AND HIS BLOB

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **WAYFORWARD** • RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2009**

It's hard not to notice how pretty A Boy and His Blob is. With its beautifully drawn and animated 2-D graphics and its HUD-less presentation, the game looks like a piece of art. And there's no shortage of brains in this beautiful title. Your blob buddy changes shape (into a ladder, parachute, hoppity ball, hole in the ground, and more) based on the jellybeans you give it, so you have do some experimenting to get through the puzzle-platformer's 40 levels. This trial-and-error gameplay can mean sacrificing the boy's safety at times—one hit from an enemy or one long fall will do him in—but no risk, no reward, right? (Thankfully, A Boy and His Blob has some generous checkpoints.) Adding another layer of strategy is the fact that you're given a particular set of jellybeans for each level. For example, your blob can morph only into an anvil, a balloon, a hole, a parachute, or a trampoline when you face a giant snake boss. This limitation on transformations is actually a blessing, as it means the game gives you the exact tools you need. **—JUSTIN C.**



[Left] Your blob can't transform when these yellow birds are around because they snatch your thrown jellybeans.



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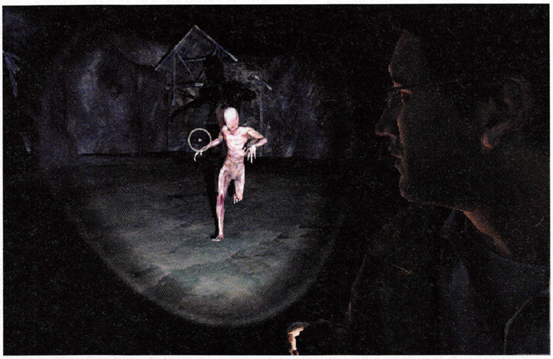
Fear Yourself

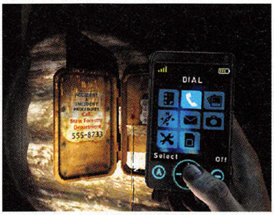
>SILENT HILL: SHATTERED MEMORIES

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **CLIMAX STUDIOS** • RELEASE: **FALL 2009**

If you've been following our coverage of the reimagined (but still Mature-rated) Silent Hill, you know the game tailors your experience based on how you respond to seven true/false questions. One of the most evident examples of how this survival-horror game is transformed by your answers is when you meet police officer Cybil. I won't go into my responses (that's between me and the game's psychiatrist), but the cap-and-leather-jacket-clad Cybil that main character Harry meets in my version of the game is sarcastic and seemingly uncaring that Harry's daughter Cheryl has gone missing. (I don't even want to know what that says about me.) After speaking with and being frustrated by Cybil, I didn't think I could feel much worse—until the world turned to ice and the faceless monsters started chasing me. Then I just wanted to stay alive. Because Harry doesn't have any weapons and can't fight back, fleeing is the only option; fortunately, the game shows you the path to safety with the blue-highlighted doors and ledges. **—JUSTIN C.**



[Above] Apparently, Harry's as impressed by the game's lighting as we are. [Below left] Your phone has many useful features, but perhaps the most useful is its long battery life.



Scare Tactics

>JU-ON: THE GRUDGE

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **AQ INTERACTIVE** • RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2009**

If you've ever played the original Resident Evil, you undoubtedly remember that moment when the zombie dog crashed through the window. JU-ON: The Grudge, based on the Japanese film of the same name, is full of such jack-in-the-box-type scares. You walk through dark, abandoned buildings (such as a dilapidated factory where you're chasing after your pet dog), and unfriendly ghosts pop out of nowhere and scare your pants off. Since publisher XSEED describes JU-ON: The Grudge as a haunted-house simulator that's meant for players of all skill levels, the controls are simple: you point at the screen with the Wii Remote to look around and aim your flashlight, walk forward with B, and interact with objects by pressing A. (You can pick up batteries for your flashlight and keys to open locked doors; these objects sparkle pretty brightly, so you can't really miss them.) As you're playing, a second player can try to startle you by pressing A on his own Wii Remote, which causes a frightening image to appear with accompanying sound. **—JUSTIN C.**

Ghosts can appear out of nowhere, so you always have to be on your guard. Too bad you don't have a proton pack....

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EVERYONE
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Mild Fantasy Violence

The Power of the Pen

> DRAWN TO LIFE: THE NEXT CHAPTER

PLATFORM: **Wii, NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **PLANET MOON (Wii), 5TH CELL (DS)**
RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2009**

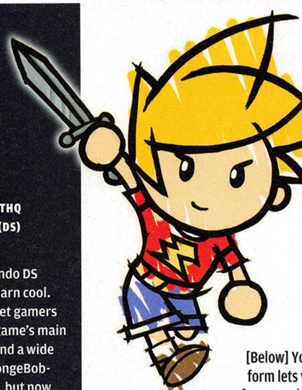
The original Drawn to Life for the Nintendo DS handheld, released in 2007, was pretty darn cool. Not only was it a solid platformer, but it let gamers unleash their artistic side and draw the game's main character, his weapons, his power-ups, and a wide variety of other persistent objects. A SpongeBob-themed follow-up was released last year, but now a true sequel—two of them, in fact—is on the way to Nintendo systems.

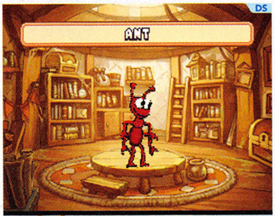
The Wii version of Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter picks up shortly after the end of the original game, but it doesn't take long to see that a lot has changed. For starters, the game is 2.5-D: 2-D gameplay with 3-D graphics. You've also got a lot more customization options for your created character. The arms, legs, head, and body can be drawn separately, and you can move the locations of your avatar's joints as you see fit.

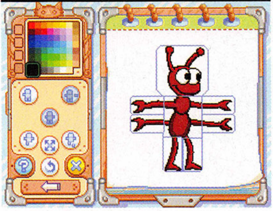
Using your newly created hero (or one of two dozen premade characters), you'll venture out into four worlds—a jungle world, an ice world, a sky world, and Shadow City. In each you'll draw and use new items that help you on your way, such as a tail (which lets you swing from objects) in the jungle levels and ice skates in the ice world. Additionally, the levels contain "action draw" areas in which you'll overcome obstacles using three types of ink: sticky ink (which creates standard platforms), bouncy ink (which, not surprisingly, is bouncy), and physics ink (which lets you create objects that you can move around and are affected by authentic physics).

Despite sharing its title with the Wii version, Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter on DS is a completely separate game. Naturally, there are similarities (such as an enhanced character-creation tool, which now lets you add or remove limbs from your creations and resize different body parts), but the story and the adventure are thoroughly different. The villainous Wilfre is back, and he's stolen the color from the world; to stop him, you'll journey to three new towns (Watersong, Lavasteam, and the Galactic Jungle) in addition to Raposa Village, which serve as hubs for 40 stages of action. You'll no longer have to rub the touch screen to destroy inky foes, but you will get to use and draw numerous weapons and vehicles, plus you'll morph into different forms—a blob and a spider—that offer unique abilities that help you navigate levels.

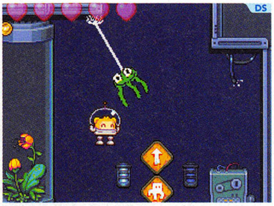
This look at Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter only scratches the surface. Expect plenty more features and hours upon hours of creative content when the games arrive in October. —**CHRIS H.**

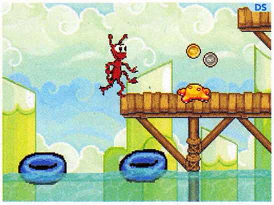


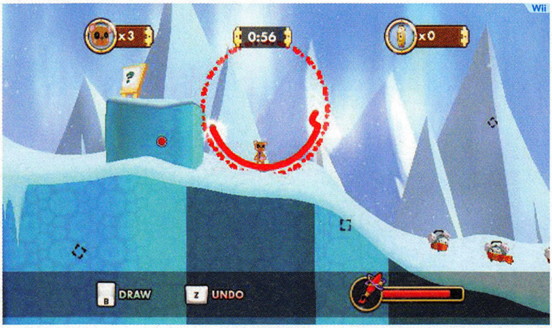




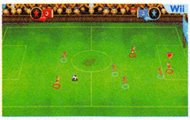
[Below] Your spider form lets you swing from a web and walk on walls.

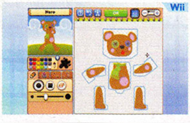


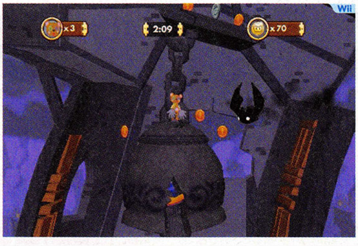




[Above] By using physics ink in designated areas, you can draw constructs that realistically interact with the environment. [Below left] Multiplayer minigames include soccer, basketball, and hockey.







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Fever Pitch

> FIFA SOCCER 10

PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CANADA** • RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2009**

If there's one complaint that non-soccer fans have about the sport, it's that footie feels rather...slow-paced. Not so in FIFA Soccer 10—this year's game has been redesigned to make the action a bit more rousing. In addition to increasing the overall game speed, EA has included a new feature for penalty, corner, and free kicks. This "Strike It System" is essentially a minigame in which you shake the Wii Remote at a specific moment. During a penalty kick, for example, you have a better chance of besting the goalkeeper if you flick the remote when your player is closest to the ball; to successfully prevent a goal when you're playing as the keeper, however, you have to give the remote a rattle once the ball glows green. This certainly makes things more exciting, especially when playing with up to three friends. Unfortunately, the Wi-Fi play wasn't up and running yet when we played, but we're told FIFA will support two-versus-two online. —**JUSTIN C.**

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Witch Hunter

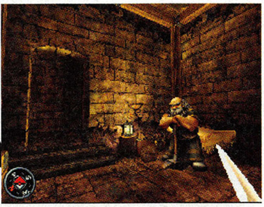
> FIGHTING FANTASY: THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN

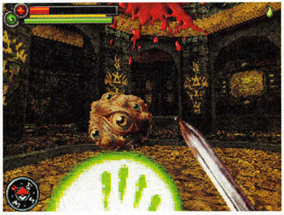
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **ASPYR**
DEVELOPER: **BIG BLUE BUBBLE** • RELEASE: **Q4 2009**

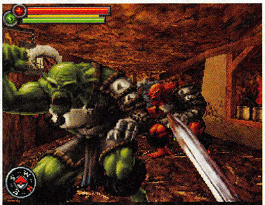
"First-person action-adventure-RPG" is a mouthful, but the description does well to sum up Fighting Fantasy: The Warlock of Firetop Mountain. Based on a Choose-Your-Own-Adventure-style book, the game fits snugly into the typical swords-and-sorcery mold, although there's plenty of tongue-in-cheek dialogue to keep things from getting overly serious.

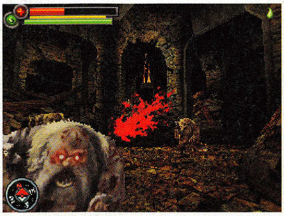
You begin your quest by choosing one of three classes—warrior, magician, or assassin—or you can create one. As you explore the depths of the monster-filled mountain, you'll earn skill points (mostly through combat) that you can apply both to attributes such as strength and intuition, and to abilities such as stealth, lock picking, and witchcraft.

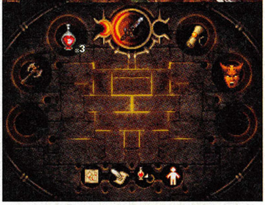
Moving around the visually appealing world is effortless—walk via the Control Pad and aim using either the touch screen or the face buttons. Simple touch-screen menus make it easy to swap weapons or gulp down some life-restoring food as you track down the titular warlock. —**CHRIS SH.**









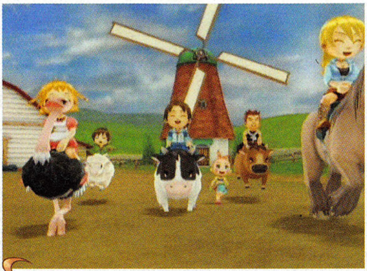


Big-Top Crops

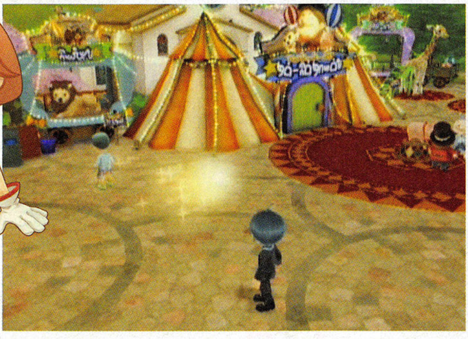
> HARVEST MOON: ANIMAL PARADE

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **MARVELOUS INTERACTIVE**
RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2009**

Harvest Moon: Animal Parade is in large part like previous games in the popular farming-sim series. As a young rancher (either male or female; your choice), you'll grow crops, raise livestock, go spelunking in the mines, reel in a few fish, chop down lumber, cook an assortment of dishes, enjoy festivals, and more. Play your cards right, and you'll even get married and start a family. As you go about your business, you'll help restore the once-lively Harmonica Town to its former glory by tracking down five Harvest Sprite bells. What sets Animal Parade apart from other games in the series is the inclusion of a traveling circus that visits the town once a month and presents its own side story about lost animals. Interacting with animals in Harvest Moon is old hat, but thanks to the circus, you're able to befriend such creatures as a giraffe, a hippo, and an elephant. Players can also look forward to owning an assortment of pets (which you can teach tricks), taking pictures and sending them to friends over WiiConnect24, and, best of all, riding a cow. —**CHRIS H.**



Decent Turnip
1000G



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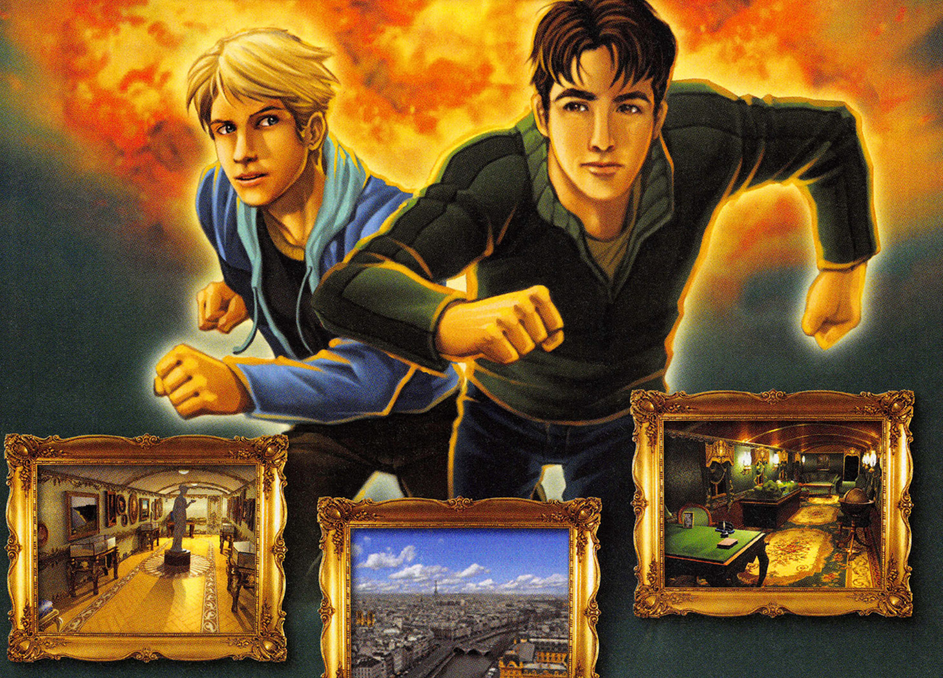

NEARLY A CENTURY AGO, the Russian Royal Family attempted to flee from Russia with their treasure to avoid the impending Revolution, planning to return the following year by train. But the family disappeared, and no one can account for the missing Romanov treasure—until now. Journey on the Royal Express train as Frank and Joe Hardy to track down the lost clues and secrets of the Royal Romanov Family in the great cities of Europe!

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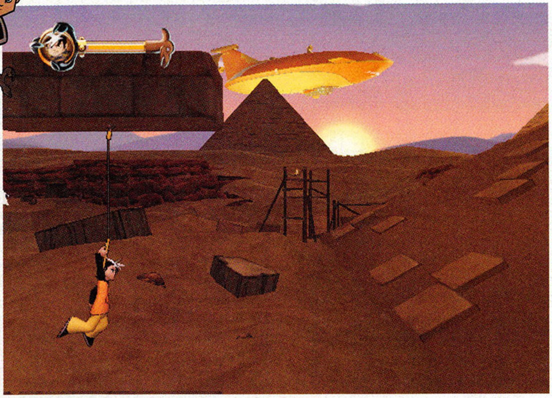
Weekend Warriors

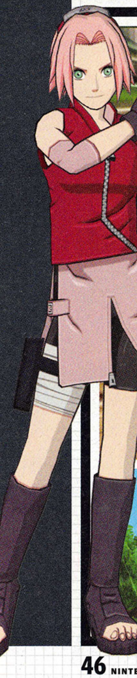
>THE SECRET SATURDAYS: BEASTS OF THE 5TH SUN

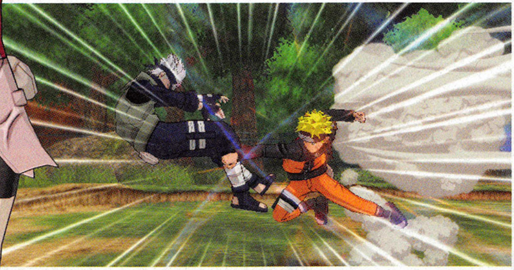
PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)** • PUBLISHER: **D3PUBLISHER**
DEVELOPER: **HIGH VOLTAGE** • RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2009**

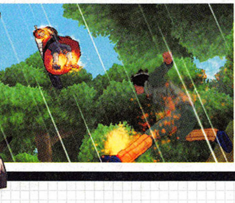
The Secret Saturdays: Beasts of the 5th Sun is based on a popular cartoon series about a family of cryptozoologists (folks that seek out undiscovered animals). But that's not important; what's important is that the game is a promising platformer full of action, puzzles, and unique challenges. Taking control of young Zak Saturday, you'll spend much of the game running and jumping through 2-D-style levels, avoiding foes and swinging using a grappling hook. When you encounter certain Cryptid beasts, however, you'll be able to control them as well, and use them to solve puzzles (such as detonating Firecracker Beetles to smash walls) or defeat foes (attacking with Peluda's quills, for example). The other Saturdays get in on the action, too; Zak's sword-wielding mom, Drew, for instance, is playable in combat situations. With High Voltage (makers of The Conduit) at the helm, The Secret Saturdays should be more than typical licensed fare. **—CHRIS H.**

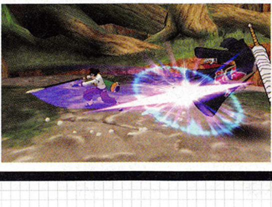


[Above] As fans of Bionic Commando know, grappling hooks make any game better.









Older & Wiser

>NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: CLASH OF NINJA REVOLUTION 3

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **TOMY**
DEVELOPER: **EIGHTING** • RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2009**

On this third outing, the developers had one goal in mind: to make the definitive Naruto fighting game. To accomplish this task, they wanted to bring back what worked about the previous Clash of Ninja games and improve what didn't. For instance, Kakashi was never a top-tier contender, but he's been upgraded with new combos and new moves (many of which he's taken from other ninjas; he is the "copy ninja," after all) that make him one of the best combatants in the game. Of course, this is a sequel based on the Shippuden story arc, so you can expect the roster to include some fresh faces. One of the most notable new challengers is old lady Chiyo, who controls two puppets that do the fighting for her. Because you have to micromanage the puppets a bit, she's for more experienced gamers; fortunately, the 34-plus other characters are much more newbie-friendly. **—JUSTIN C.**

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TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Alcohol Reference
Blood
Fantasy Violence

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Let's Kick Shell!

> TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: ARCADE ATTACK

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT** • RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2009**

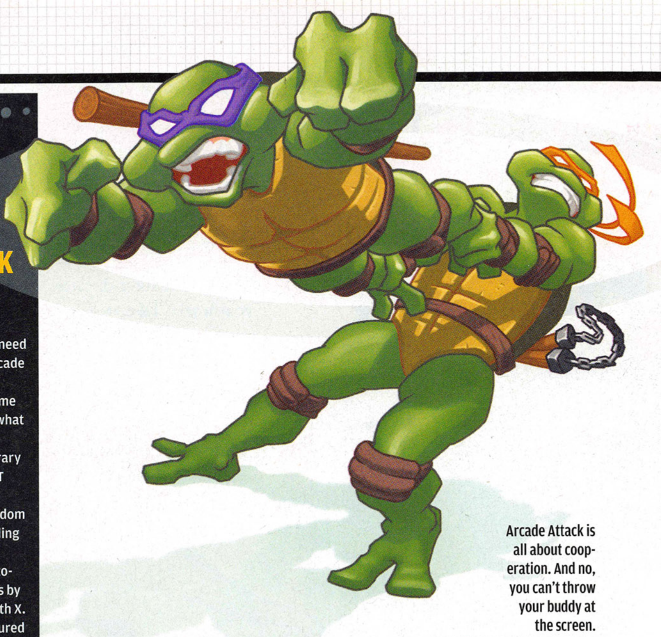
PREVIEW
OCTOBER '09

There's only one thing longtime turtlemaniacs need to know about Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Arcade Attack—you can throw an enemy at the screen, Turtles in Time-style. OK, there's more to the game than that, but that little touch is emblematic of what Ubisoft is trying to achieve in the turtles' latest outing. Arcade Attack is essentially a contemporary version of classic titles such as the original TMNT arcade game and the aforementioned Turtles in Time. Up to two players can team up against random goons, Foot soldiers, and familiar bosses (including Shredder and Baxter Stockman).

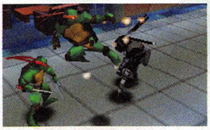
Like its inspirations, Arcade Attack has easy-to-learn controls: attack with your turtle's weapons by tapping B, kick with A, block with Y, and jump with X. (You can also jump-kick, but the developers ensured that unlike its predecessors, this game has been balanced in such a way that you can't just jump-kick your way to victory.) By pressing Y and B together, you can grab either your opponent or an ally. Doing the former is necessary if you want to chuck baddies at the screen; doing the latter is helpful when you're surrounded, as you can grab your buddy's arms and spin around like a top, knocking down the foes that get in your way. Additionally, you can grab weapons (such as crowbars and baseball bats) and throwable objects (giant orange traffic cones, for instance) off the ground. Although all of the playable characters share this control scheme, they each have individual strengths and weaknesses.

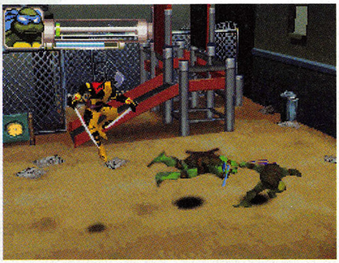
Even with this arsenal of attacks, however, you're bound to get hurt at some point as you progress through the Story mode's eight stages. Fortunately, there's plenty of healing pizza and Chinese food lying around. Yes, the four teenage chelonians eat more than just pizza pies—in fact, say the developers, Chinese takeout is their food of choice in Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird's original comic book. Speaking of which, animated panels from those black-and-white comics are used as the game's cutscenes. But new fans shouldn't worry that this title is too old-school: Arcade Attack is a mélange of three different versions of TMNT. Obviously, the original incarnation is well represented, but there are also elements from the modern rendition, plus from the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Fast Forward* cartoon.

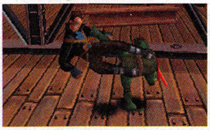
Naturally, the Story mode is the real meat of the game, but you can play Survival, Boss Battle, and Time Attack modes, too. These are pretty standard for a modern beat-'em-up like this, but Arcade Attack allows you to partake of all of these modes cooperatively with a friend via local wireless. —**JUSTIN C.**

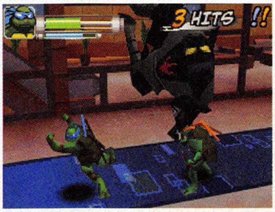


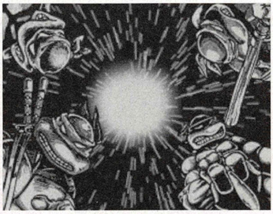
Arcade Attack is all about cooperation. And no, you can't throw your buddy at the screen.



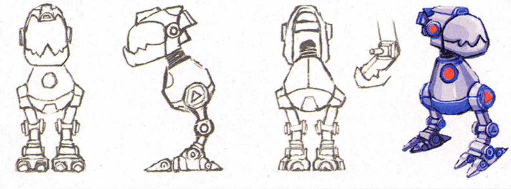


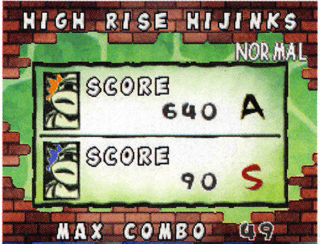






[Below] Like the turtles, Baxter Stockman's Mousers have gotten a bit of a makeover.

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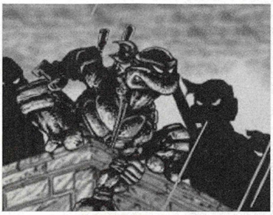
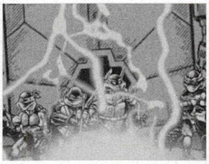
NORMAL
SCORE
640 A
SCORE
90 S
MAX COMBO 49



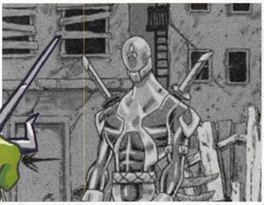
15 HITS
Good

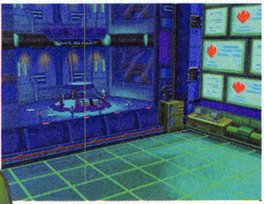
11 HITS
G.Gd.Gd

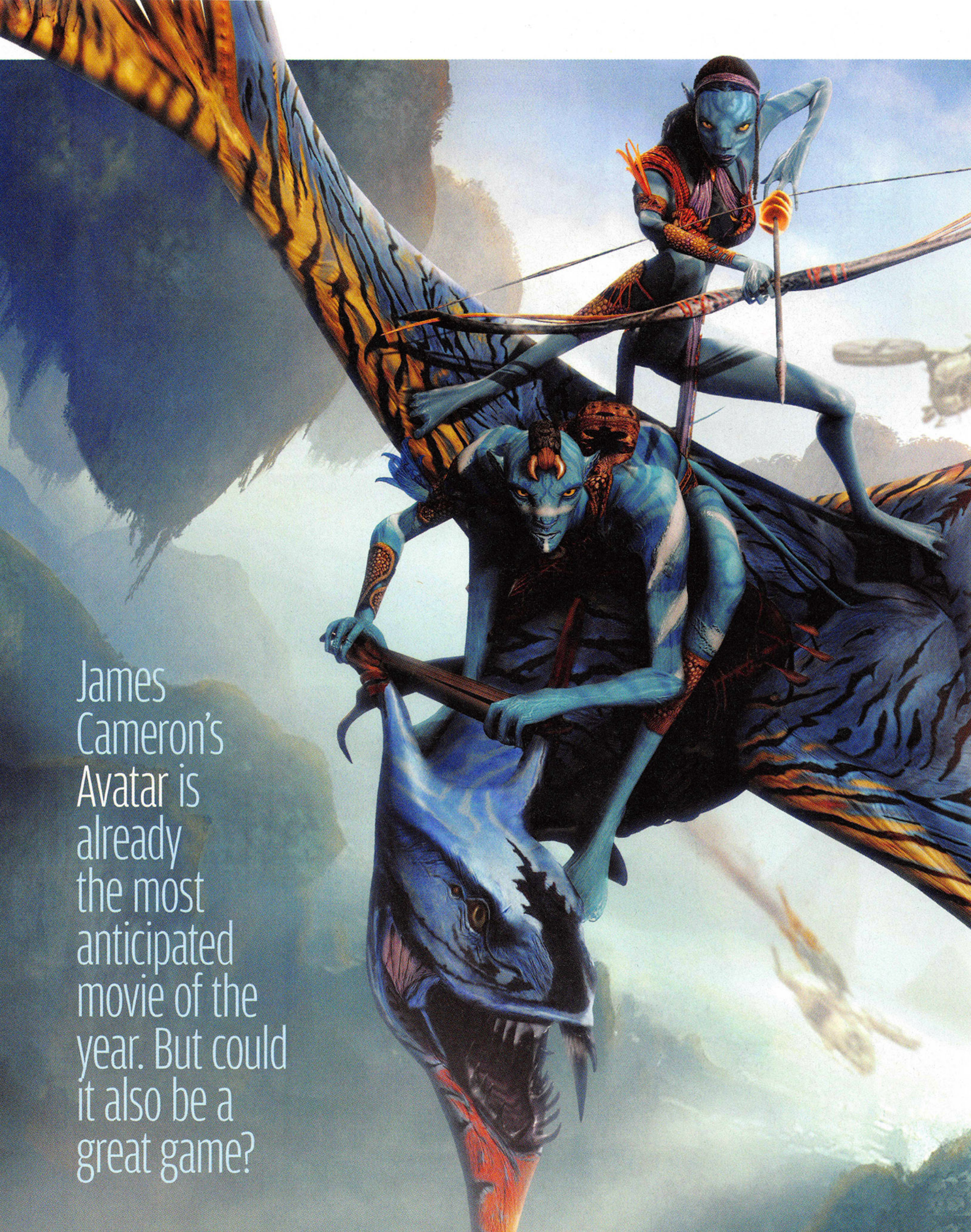
[Below] The cut-scenes should look familiar to old-school TMNT fans.



[Above] Turtles beating up Foot soldiers—what more could you want?







James Cameron's Avatar is already the most anticipated movie of the year. But could it also be a great game?

BY STEVE THOMASON

BRAVE NEW WORLD

MOVIE GAMES SUCK. That unseemly truth dates back as far as the medium itself, evidenced by the millions of unsold E.T. cartridges sitting in a New Mexico landfill. Typically, the titles are viewed by licensee and licensor alike as little more than a merchandising opportunity, and quality comes a distant second to making the film's release date. But *Avatar* is no ordinary motion picture. This is the first feature film from director James Cameron since 1997's record-grossing, Oscar-winning *Titanic*. It's been his passion project for more than a decade, and Hollywood's most notorious perfectionist isn't about to have his work tarnished by a crappy video game.

So Cameron enlisted Ubisoft Montreal, one of the industry's most accomplished development studios, responsible for such critically acclaimed hits as Prince of Persia, Assassin's Creed, and Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell. And sensitive to the fact that most licensed games suffer from criminally short lead times, he started working with the team more than two years ago. For its part, Ubisoft eschewed the standard multiplatform approach of building just one game and shoehorning it onto every major console. "When we got this license, we really wanted to explore its universe as much as possible," says producer Noel Kechichian, who points out that Cameron had no interest in simply rehashing the film. "So we decided to tell a different story on each of the different platforms. Also, this is a very important

PLATFORM **Wii**	PUBLISHER **UBISOFT**	DEVELOPER **UBISOFT MONTREAL**	RELEASE **DECEMBER 2009**

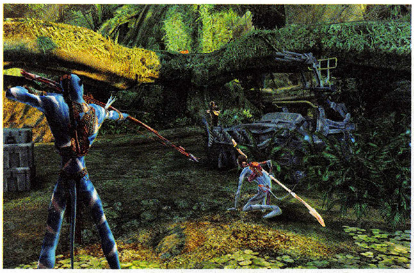
partnership for Ubisoft, so there's a big emphasis on quality. We really believe in the license and want to do right by it." As a result, the Avatar you see on these pages was crafted specifically for the Wii console, and is a completely different game from the PlayStation 3/Xbox 360 version. But before we delve into that, a brief primer on the Avatar universe is in order.

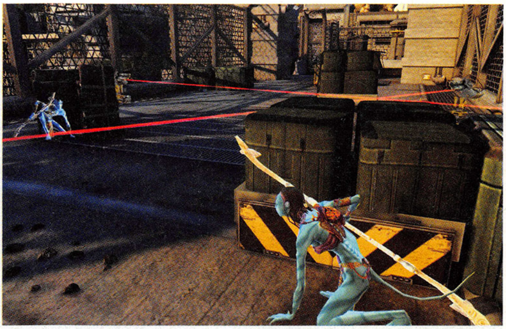
The movie is set approximately 100 years in the future. Earth has become overpopulated, and mankind's energy needs have spiraled out of control. A powerful new energy source is discovered on Pandora, the lush moon of a distant planet. Pandora is also home to the Na'vi, a race of blue-skinned, 10-foot-tall humanoids who live harmoniously within their unspoiled world. As the Resources Development Administration (better known as the RDA) begins large-scale mining operations on Pandora, the Na'vi's very existence is threatened, leading to conflict between the two peoples.

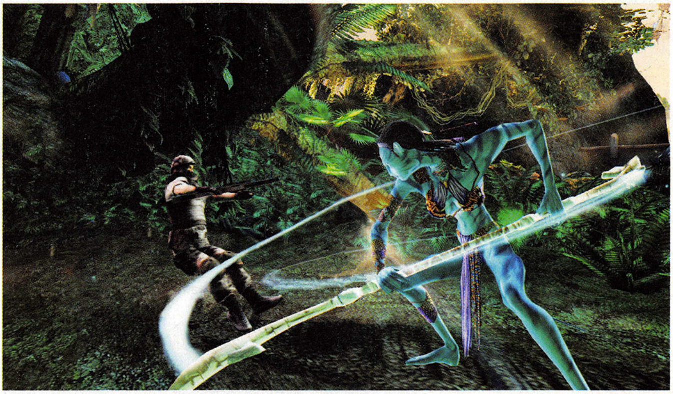
GO BLUE

The Wii version of Avatar takes place a few years prior to the events of the movie. You play as a Na'vi hunter named Ryuk. He and his sister Kyuna are the only surviving members of their tribe. When the siblings were very young, a group of humans wiped out the rest of the clan and stole its sacred artifacts, which are considered works of art back on Earth and command a high price. As the game begins, our hero's first priority is to infiltrate the human outposts and take back what's rightfully his.

Though Avatar is more action-adventure than pure stealth, the core gameplay tenet is *stalk, strike, and evade*. Human weaponry is far more advanced than Ryuk's long staff, so direct confrontation is usually best avoided. A Na'vi's best bet is to take advantage of his home turf. Your character moves through Pandora's dense forests with ease, and can progress unseen by sneaking through high grass or navigating the branches overhead. "As in the movie, [the Na'vi] are very good at melding with their surroundings," explains creative director Daniel Bisson. "It's almost like they disappear, not because they become invisible, but because they know how to move in such a way as to blend in with their environment." Conversely, Ryuk's adversaries stick out like a sore thumb when you activate his Na'vi Sense. Accessible via the C Button only while Ryuk is standing still, this ability highlights all major points of interest in the vicinity, and serves as an invaluable scouting tool. Formulating a plan of attack makes it much easier to sneak up on enemies without being spotted, at which point you can press the B







[Below] We hope the RDA has a good health plan.

Button to initiate a stealth attack. Then it's simply a matter of flicking the Wii Remote controller as instructed to dispatch your foe by any number of ferocious means, be it slamming his head into the ground or sending him airborne with the business end of your staff. Early on, Ryuk will add a bow to his arsenal, as well, enabling you to take out enemies from afar.

Of course, when the need arises to meet your opponents head-on, you can swing your staff vertically or horizontally via corresponding movements of the Wii Remote. You can also string together combos, but only with the proper timing. "I play a lot of Wii games, and too many of them ask you to waggle all the time," opines Bisson. "We wanted to prevent that as much as possible and to reward players for using the remote in an intelligent way." Combat further benefits from the ability to lock the camera on your closest adversary with a press of the Z Button.

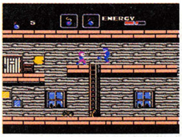
As you explore Pandora and defeat the human intruders, you'll gather blue orbs called Eywa, which represent the moon's essence and enable you to upgrade your staff, bow, and Ryuk himself. "You can specialize as you see fit," according to Bisson. "You might decide to spend all of your points on your staff, for instance, and just become a strictly staff-oriented character." In addition to obvious enhancements like increased power or speed, you can earn new skills, such as the ability to disable turrets.

COMRADES IN ARMS

Sometimes no amount of self-improvement beats a helping hand. Fortunately, a second player can jump in at any time and play as Kyuna. This adds a whole new dynamic to the game, where one player diverts the enemy's attention, allowing the other to move in for a stealth attack. "We want the characters to be able to work together like two predators," says Bisson. Indeed, with a bit of practice, you and your partner can get into a lethal rhythm. You'll have other opportunities to collaborate, as well, and like it always

SCREEN GEMS

Every once in a while, a movie-licensed game bucks the trend and actually turns out well. Here are a few of our favorites.



The Goonies II
(1987, NES)

LUKE
×04
SCORE:
00157150
TIME: 458
SEEKER
KALHAR BOSS MONSTER

Super Star Wars
(1992, SUPER NES)

Aladdin
(1993, SEGA GENESIS)

GoldenEye 007
(1997, NINTENDO 64)

King Kong
(2005, GAMECUBE)

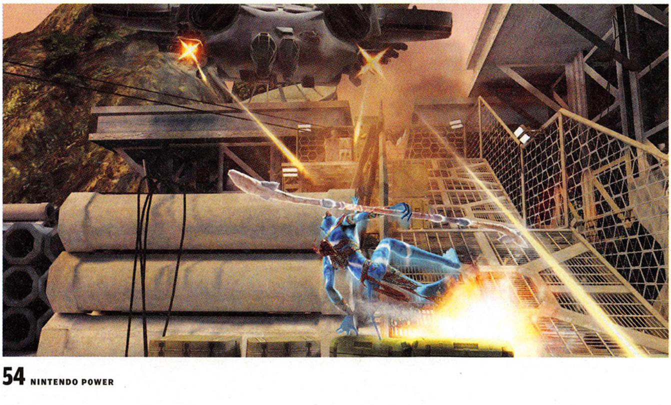
does, co-op play just makes everything more fun. (And yes, Kyuna can upgrade her abilities just like Ryuk.)

If you have a Wii MotionPlus accessory, another source of assistance is the Hellfire Wasp. At certain points in the game, the peripheral enables you to summon one of the insects and tilt the controller to guide its flight. In the example we saw, an electric fence blocks Ryuk's path, so he leads the wasp through a hole and uses the explosive bug to destroy a generator on the other side. If you don't have a Wii MotionPlus, fret not; there will always be an alternate way to complete your objective (in this case, a bit of tricky platforming).

Beyond the electric fence awaits our first glimpse at one of Avatar's boss encounters. Confronted by a massive RDA helicopter, Ryuk's weapons are of little use. Instead, he must make his way up a nearby tower, moving from one piece of cover to the next to avoid the gunship's fire. At the top, he finds some explosive canisters that he can whack to bring the whole structure crashing down on the chopper. It's an impressively cinematic scene that ends with Ryuk plummeting toward his demise, only to be swooped up by a large winged creature called a Banshee.

Better still, Ryuk's flight doesn't end with the cut-scene. We actually get to control the Banshee as it soars through a dazzling river valley. The stage is on rails (à la Star Fox), but you steer your mount by tilting the Nunchuk controller or via the Wii Balance Board accessory. Both methods work remarkably well, and it's a good thing, too, because you'll need to squeeze through some pretty tight spots and avoid RDA mines. While Ryuk pilots, Kyuna serves as a gunner, and you can fire her bow by pointing the Wii Remote at the screen and pressing the B Button. (In co-op mode, player two will handle archery duty.)

When we reach the end of

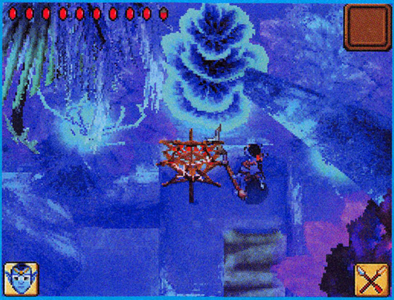


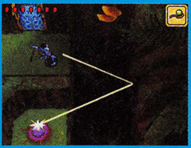
the valley and pass through a waterfall, we're hit with one of the most breathtaking spectacles ever witnessed on Wii. Against a sky ablaze with the colors of the setting sun, beautifully verdant mountains float majestically above a pristine lake. It's perhaps the greatest example of what you get by combining James Cameron's artistic vision with the technical expertise of Ubisoft Montreal, which is pushing the Wii hardware to rarely seen heights. "Most of the assets we use come from the film," says Bisson of the collaboration. "I bet we have tens of thousands of assets from the movie—photos from the set, photos of all the props, absolutely everything. It's pretty cool." We don't have much time to gawk, though, because another RDA helicopter is in pursuit. Our second encounter with one of the human whirlybirds involves lots of skillful dodging, as well as motion-controlled quick-time events to send your Banshee on the attack.

That aerial diversion exemplifies one of the team's primary goals with Avatar. "We're focused on having a lot of variety—in our maps, in the environments, and also in terms of the challenges that the player faces," stresses Kechichian. "Every time you play a new map, you'll learn something new, meet a new type of enemy, see a new type of environment. It might be possible to hide in water, for instance. That would be really cool and it's something we're working on." It bears mentioning that all of the screenshots in this article are from an early portion of the game and are not indicative of the full breadth of the adventure.

HAIL TO THE KING

Another important objective for the team is telling a story worthy of James Cameron's universe. At the heart of that effort lies forging a connection between you and the game's hero. "The reason we structured the story like we did is that we want the player to go on this journey of discovery with Ryuk," explains Bisson. "Neither will truly understand what a Na'vi is at first. They won't understand how profound the Na'vi's relation is with nature. I wanted to create





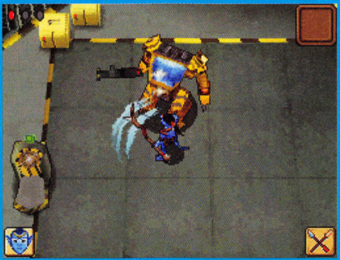
POCKET PANDORA

The Nintendo DS handheld is getting its own unique version of Avatar. In development by a separate team at Ubisoft Montreal, the game stars a young Na'vi named Nok who discovers a strange device that fell from the sky. The machine (part of a human experiment unbeknownst to Nok) is causing the local wildlife to go berserk, and our hero takes it upon himself to get to the bottom of things.

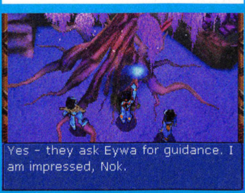
Along with having a decidedly lighter tone than its console counterpart, the DS game places a greater emphasis on exploration and puzzle-solving. It feels a little bit like The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass, including a top-down presentation and touch-based controls. Nok moves in whichever direction you drag the stylus, and attacks when you swipe it across an enemy. To have him interact with a block, lever, or other object of interest, you simply give it a quick tap. Unfortunately, none of the screenshots Ubisoft provided show the top screen, but we can tell you that most of the time it displays a helpful map.

One of your main goals throughout the adventure is to collect lost totems. Doing so adds new entries to your Pandorapedia, which offers a wealth of information on the Avatar universe. Certain totems also offer various character upgrades, though you'll have to cough up the required essence (think Rupees) to unlock them. You'll also acquire an assortment of handy tools, including a vine whip that lets you swing from branches and a sling that comes in handy for hard-to-reach switches (you can even ricochet your shots).

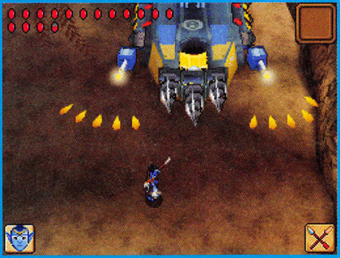
For Nintendo DSi owners, there's an exclusive side quest that tasks you with snapping photos of certain-colored objects. You'll learn part of the Warrior's Song for each successful pic, and once you've completed the ditty, you'll unlock a new character model for our hero. Not exactly earth-shattering, but it's nice to see support for the new hardware's capabilities.

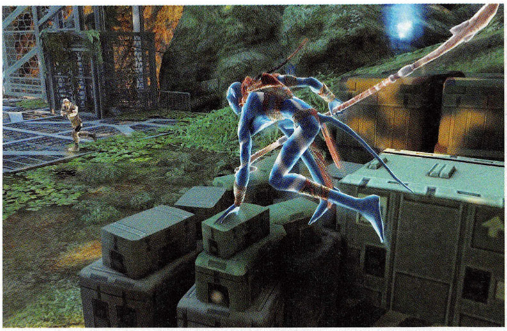


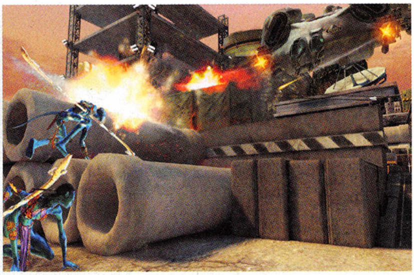
[Above] That mech looks a lot like the one from Cameron's *Aliens*. Hopefully Ripley's not piloting it.



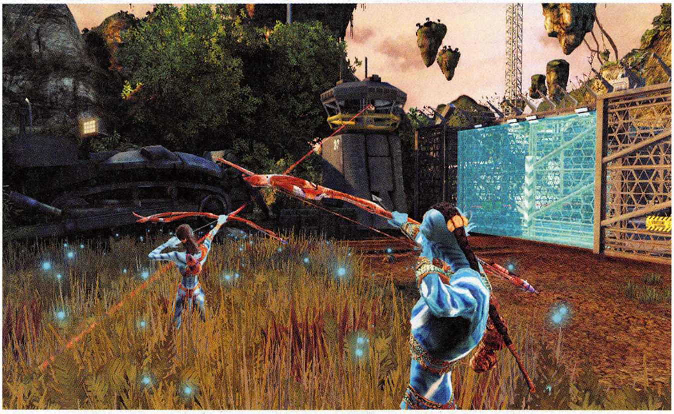
Yes - they ask Eywa for guidance. I am impressed, Nok.







Avatar uses an updated version of Ubisoft's Jade engine to create some of the most stunning visuals on Wii.

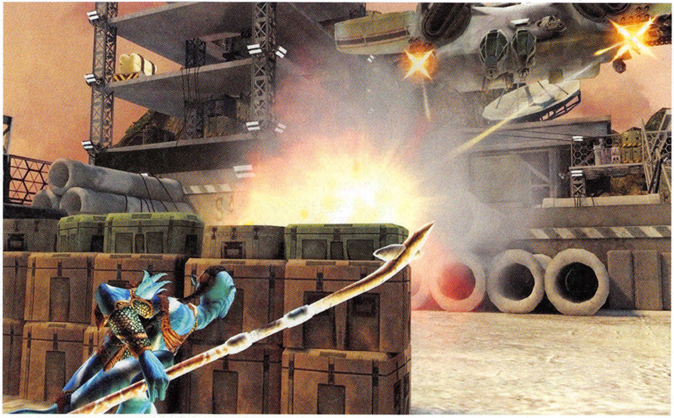


something that, as you progress through the game, you're starting to understand what a Na'vi is alongside our protagonists. Ryuk was deprived of this connection through his clan when he was younger. When he comes in contact with another clan, they expose him to that experience. And it's something that he doesn't understand at first. But he'll learn how to reconnect with who he is. By the end, you really feel what it is to be a Na'vi."

Bisson also hopes to paint the narrative with subtler colors than you typically see in a video game. As he puts it, "We want to give the Na'vi's perspective of this world, but still understanding the antagonists. They're human beings. Not just dark, evil guys. The game starts very black and white. You are good and they are evil. But the further you go, the spectrum becomes more grey." Adds production manager Henri-Philippe Guay, "That duality is a big part of Avatar. It exists throughout the movie, the other console games, the DS game, etc. The corporation is never viewed as the ultimate villain. They have a reason for being there. The survival of the human race is at stake. And there are a lot of different interests. There are the economic and military aspects of the RDA, but there are also scientists who are there for self-improvement and take a different view on how to interact with Pandora."

The filmmakers took great interest in the game's story, as well, and as a result, it will play an important part in the events leading up to the movie. "Your hero's story is part of the culture of the Na'vi," comments Bisson. "That's something we brainstormed a lot with [Avatar film producer] Jon Landau. Our character is one who could spark the first rebellion of the Na'vi against the humans."

James Cameron has transported audiences to a lot of great places over the years, but we're particularly excited for his latest destination: a brave new world where movie games no longer suck.



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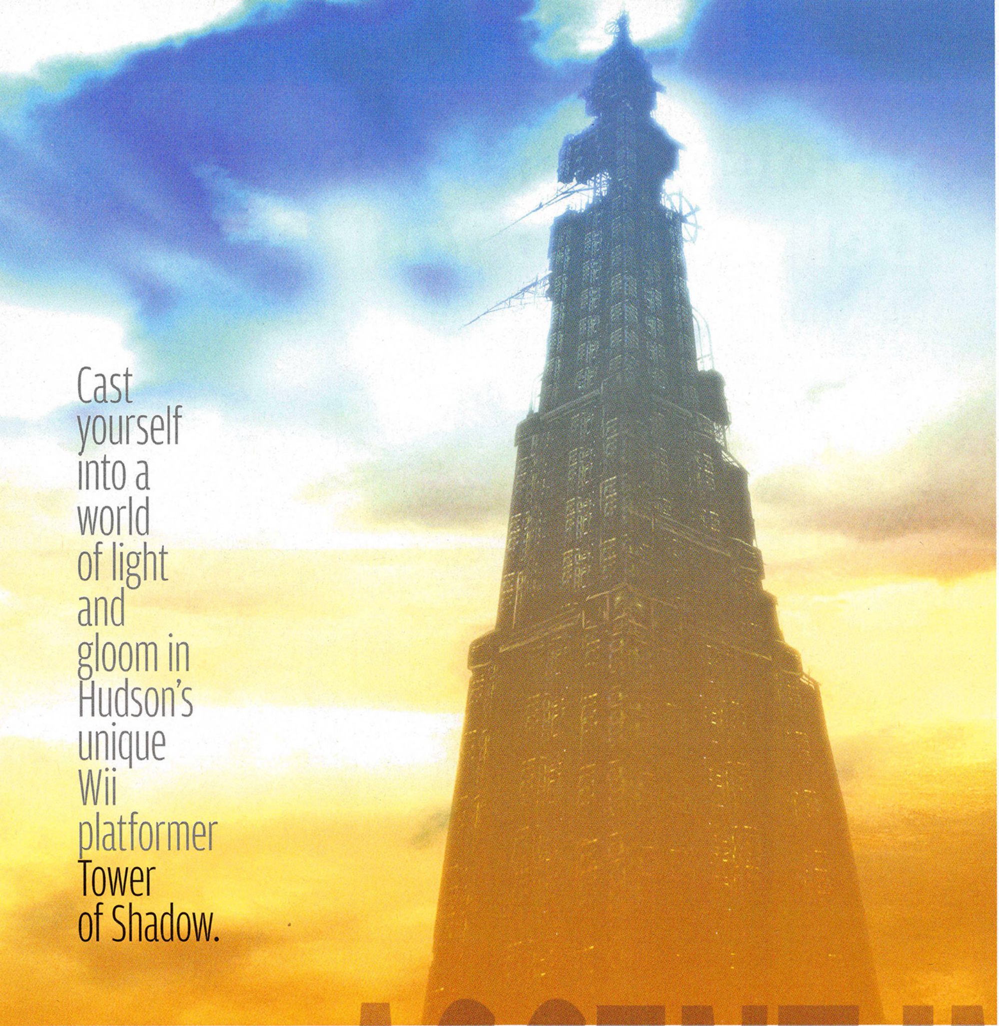
ASCENT INTO



Cast yourself into a world of light and gloom in Hudson's unique Wii platformer Tower of Shadow.

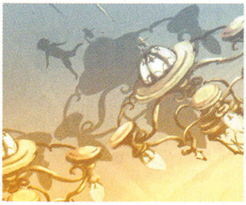
BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

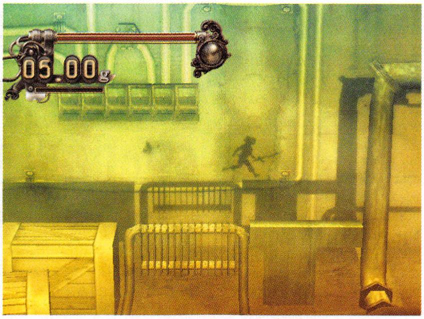
A GREAT VIDEO GAME can do more than provide engrossing gameplay. It can also set moods, evoke emotions, and maybe, just maybe, make players ponder the events that they see unfolding on the screen before them. That's why—even though we've played only a few levels and seen concept art of a handful more—we're so transfixed by Tower of Shadow (working title): it explores themes and gameplay concepts that take it beyond the typical gaming experience.

In some ways, the Wii-console-exclusive Tower of Shadow is a traditional platformer. Using the Control Stick and buttons, you run, jump, grab, climb, and swing a sword like in other games. (The Wii Remote controller's pointer function will be used, too, but we don't yet know how.) In other ways, the game is anything but traditional, as evidenced by the fact that rather than playing as a typical video game character, you play primarily as a character's shadow. The developers haven't divulged many story details, but we know that in Tower of Shadow, a boy somehow winds up in a strange world in which he exists only as a shadow, and he can interact only with other shadows.

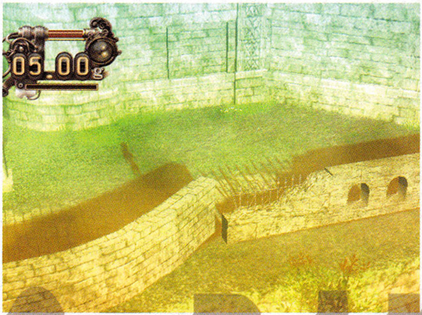
This notion of a shadow-based world changes the way you perceive the environments, as 3-D constructs create a 2-D play field. An artistically designed stone wall isn't just a wall; its shadow creates a floor and a steep incline. An old wrought-iron fence casts a pit of spikes; pillars make solid barriers; pipes' shadows act as platforms. You'll have to learn to use the shadows to your advantage as you explore numerous areas in and around the titular tower, including a garden, sewers, a mine, a factory, and a deep well.

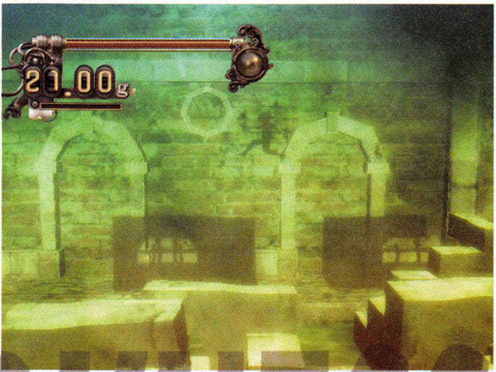
The unique shadow-driven world is matched by an equally arresting visual style. Reminiscent of acclaimed PlayStation 2 titles Ico and Shadow of the Colossus, Tower of Shadow features extremely detailed textures (grassy knolls and stone etchings look particularly impressive) and oversaturated lighting effects that stand in stark contrast to the shadows you interact with. The graphics go a long way in





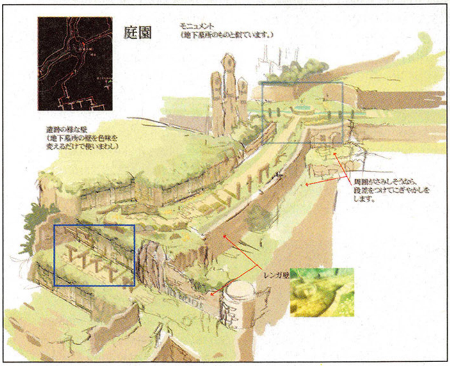
Walls, boxes, chandeliers—everyday objects become much more compelling when you're wandering a world of shadows.

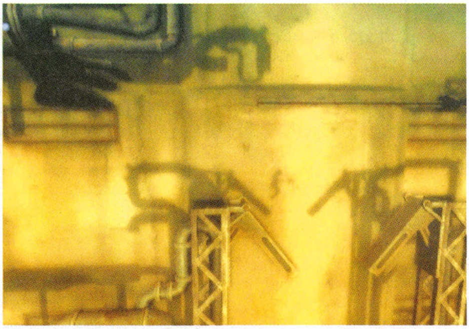




DARKNESS

[Below] An overview of the tower's garden. This is where it all begins.


庭園
モニュメント
（地下墓所のものと似ています。）
遺跡の様な壁
（地下墓所の壁を色味を
変えるだけで使いまわし）
周囲がさみしそうなら、
段差をつけてにぎやかしを
します。
レンガ壁



establishing the game's somber, reflective mood. The stark setting is unlike that of any other game on Wii, and that innovative style is all the more surprising when you consider that the game is coming from Hudson, a company best known for cute, colorful, family-oriented fare such as the Bomberman games.

Were that all there were to Tower of Shadow, it would still be an intriguing game, but what makes it even more promising is that you'll actually have some measure of control over the shadow world itself, adding a puzzle element to the action. The protagonist is accompanied by a fairy shadow (tentatively called a Spengle), and at certain points in the levels you'll find doorways you can send her through. After traveling through a door, the Spengle materializes in the physical world, assuming the shape of a featureless white being—sort of an antishadow. For a limited time, you'll be able to control the Spengle and interact with the 3-D environment—rotating pillars or moving stone blocks, for example—thus manipulating the shadows and altering the 2-D stage design. In addition, you'll be able to influence the shadows by controlling light sources, although Hudson representatives haven't revealed the specifics of how that aspect will work.

Tower of Shadow is still a long way off—it isn't scheduled to come out until summer 2010—but it's nonetheless one of the most provocative games on the Wii horizon. We look forward to learning a lot more about the title in the months to come.

INTERVIEW **OSAMU TSUCHIHASHI**

SHADOW PUPPETEER

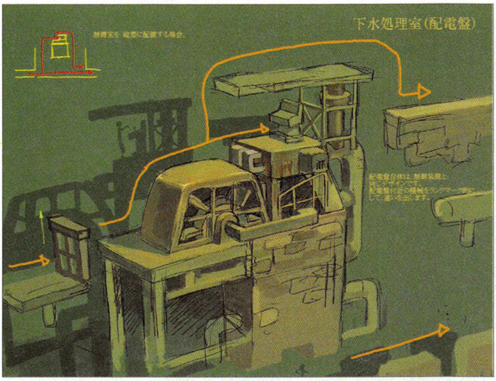
Though you wouldn't know it by looking at their games, the developers responsible for Tower of Shadow are the same ones who created Hudson's cute (but challenging) marble-rolling Kororinpa series. The chief designer of Kororinpa, Osamu Tsuchihashi, is also the director and creator of Tower of Shadow. We recently had the chance to speak to Tsuchihashi to allow him to further illuminate his promising new endeavor.

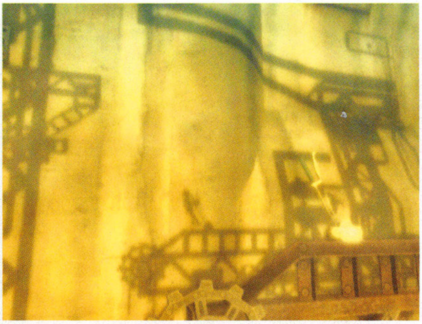
NINTENDO POWER Where did the idea for Tower of Shadow originate?

OSAMU TSUCHIHASHI I was blessed with my first kid last year. The day after the delivery, I was heading to work as usual when I passed by some kids playing in a park nearby my house. That's when I stopped and pondered the many playground games and rules I would have to teach my newborn.

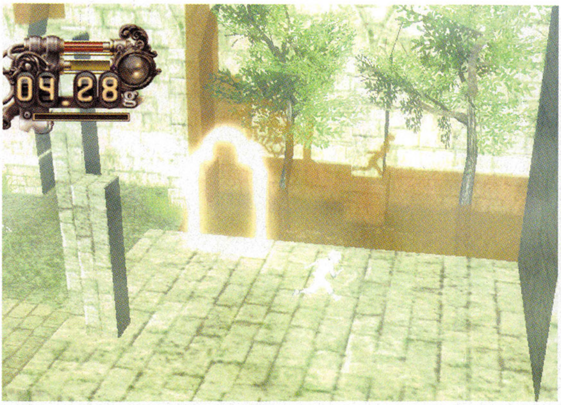
Just then, I had a flashback to numerous incidents of myself as a child, filthy to the bone from playing outside all day long. I remembered a game we used to play called Shadow Tag, where the goal is to step on the other kid's shadow.

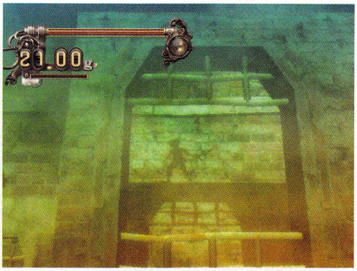
It may have been a special rule just within our circle, but there was one where we weren't allowed to hide within another shadow. The





[Left] You'll be able to interact with machines in the drainage area to create a navigable path through the level.





[Left] Glowing doorways allow the Spengle to enter the physical world.

grassy lot where this game was usually conducted was bordered with the shadow made by the buildings where our gang lived.

That's when the idea for this title popped into my head. So, in a way, this game is a recreation my childhood memories and a gift from my newborn kid.

What can you tell us about the game's story and the world in which this title takes place?
I would like for the users to actually experience this instead of spoiling it here. All I will say is that in this universe, there is the tower, and then there's the boy's shadow. That's it.

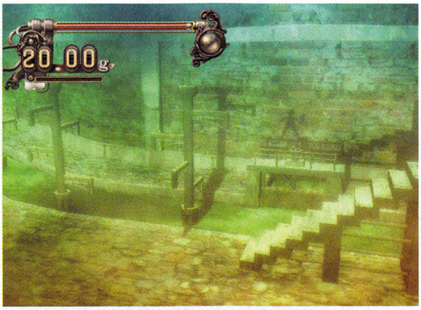
What inspired the art style?
The inspiration for the art style comes from my all-time favorite classic animation by Hayao Miyazaki, *Future Boy Conan*. Very old cartoon....

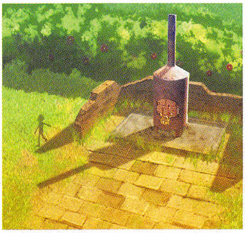
What about this game makes it especially suited to Wii?
We're not one of those big projects, so we thought the Wii environment would be the best direction to go in terms of aiming for [something] experimental, researchable, and new.

We understand the team previously worked on the Kororinpa games. Were there any lessons you learned from making those games that you were able to apply to Tower of Shadow?
The gimmicks and the [level-design tool] are utilized here. Marble Saga is full to the brim with basic knowledge that we used here, and we were able to acquire even more with this title.

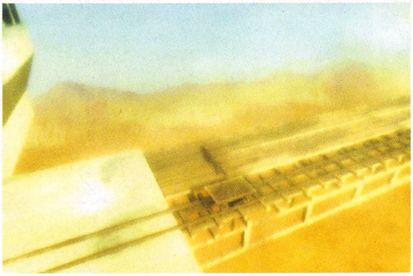
How does the Spengle fit into the story, and what inspired its inclusion in the game?
The [Spengle] is closely in sync with the story itself. I cannot say anything beyond this point yet.

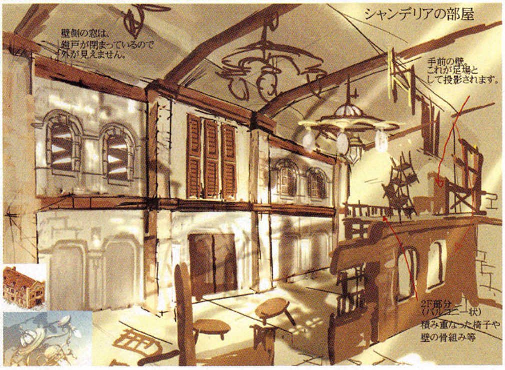
How did you approach level design for the game? Were there any unique challenges you encountered in creating levels out of shadows as opposed to making traditional environments?
There have been loads of challenges so far, and I don't

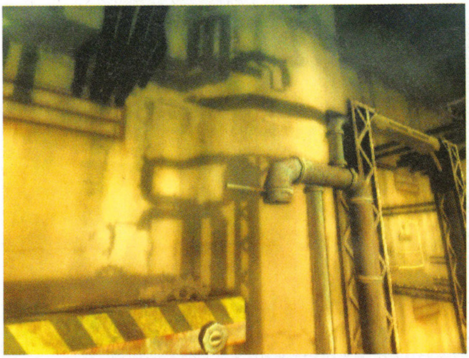




[Right] This design sketch shows the types of shapes and play fields that shadows can create.



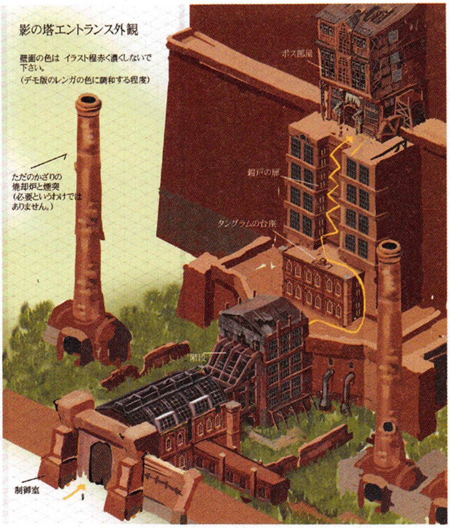

シャンデリアの部屋
壁側の窓は、
鎧戸が閉まっているので
外が見えません。
手前の壁。
これが足場と
して投影されます。
2F部分
（バルコニー状）
積み重なった椅子や
壁の骨組み等



assume that this will end anytime soon. In the beginning, we went out and bought actual building blocks from toy shops, stacked them up, and lit them to get an overall feel. Then, using the edit system from Marble Saga, we created a system that can digitalize the process, as well as tweak the wrinkles out.

It was a long and hard road leading to more of the same until the boy's shadow physics were calculated, added with collisions, ultimately enabling the shadow to walk. The look may be somewhat different from other games, but the development process is no different from any other games—a compilation of small and basic tasks. We made absolutely sure that all of them were met head-on and conquered.

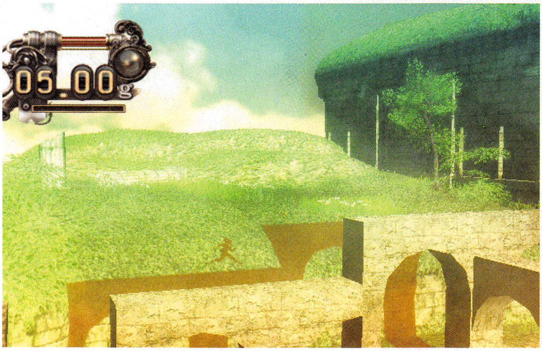
Can you give some examples of how you'll be able to manipulate the light sources in the game?
We believe that if the user cannot change the light source, the game would lose half the fun. We intend on giving the users various ways of shifting and morphing shadows.


影の塔エントランス外観
壁面の色は イラスト程赤く濃くしないで下さい。
（デモ版のレンガの色に調和する程度）
ボス部屋
ただのかざりの焼却炉と煙突（必要というわけではありません。）
タングラムの台座
階段
制御室

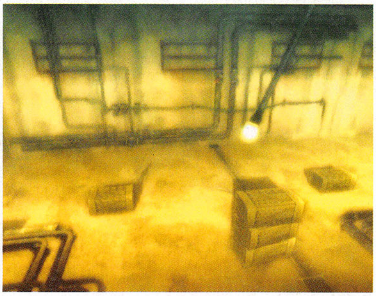
[Right] This concept art illustrates the entrance to the tower. The line shows the player's path.

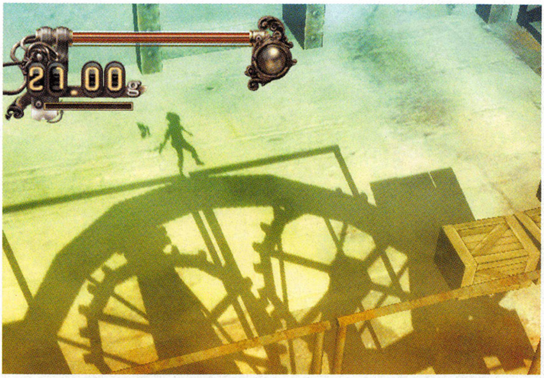
What do you think are some of the most interesting obstacles/puzzles in the game?
That would have to be the change in the light source. The slight angle change would drastically modify the field itself. We've done extensive research on this subject, and we have implemented aspects far more interesting than just the aforementioned control, but I can't say anything about it yet....

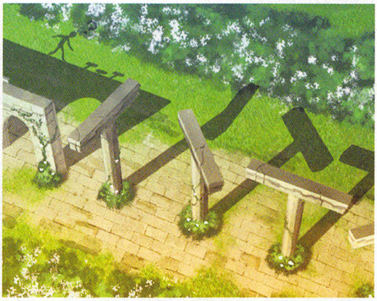
We're told the final game will last somewhere around 12-14 hours. How will you keep the concepts fresh for the duration of the game?
We intend on incorporating stage structures, hard modes for the second run, various enemies, and many enhanced abilities. We are aiming for a 12-hour play time, but we don't intend on making the game repetitive just to meet that length.



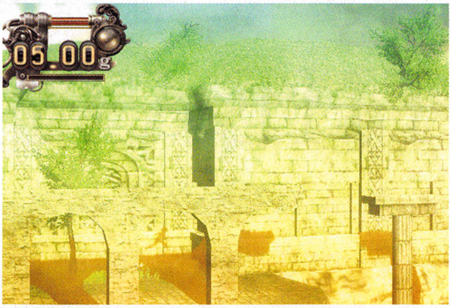
[Below] If this light source starts swinging, the shadows and stage design will get really crazy in a hurry.







[Below] Detailed textures, a restrained color palette, and oversaturated lighting effects give Tower of the Shadow a look that's unlike anything else on Wii.



We know you can run, jump, grab and climb onto ledges, and swing a sword. Are there other abilities you'll be able to use?
The basic maneuvers are there. We are also contemplating the use of actions that are unique to this game, but [those plans are] still on the drawing board.

Are there any other weapons in the game aside from the sword? Is the sword used only for combat or does it have other applications, too?
The sword will be used as a weapon. Storywise, this item will also become a key element.

What kinds of enemies will you encounter?
All I can say now is that the enemies will also be shadows.

What will the boss battles be like? Will they also have a puzzle aspect to them?
The boss battles are also works in progress at this time, but we intend on having various puzzle aspects to them. How? That's for me to create and you to find out.

What do you think makes a good platformer? What are some of your favorites?
I think it's important for a game to have at least one aspect that strikes the player's interest. That is also the single most mind-numbing issue that's constantly swirling in our minds as developers. I'm hoping that this title will do just that.

My favorite games are the Legend of Zelda series and Prince of Persia. All of these are great, and I truly envy the developers of these titles for making such splendid games.

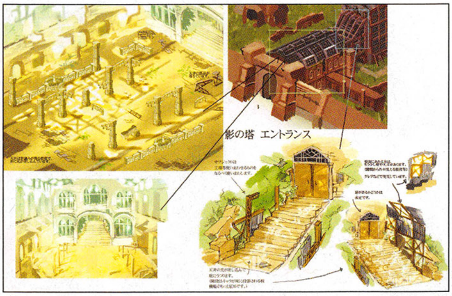
The game seems to have a much more melancholy feel than most platformers. What made you go in this direction?
We had been creating the fundamental aspects of the title as a game, but the feel was not at all intentional. Truthfully speaking, it just turned out this way as we were making it. Maybe the shadow boy led us in that direction?

We're told that themes such as sadness and death are dealt with in the game. Can you elaborate on how those are addressed?
I cannot talk about this at length just yet.... Death is, in fact, one of the game's underlying themes, but we don't intend to bring it out fully, along with the sadness. I can say that the story will not be a true tragedy.

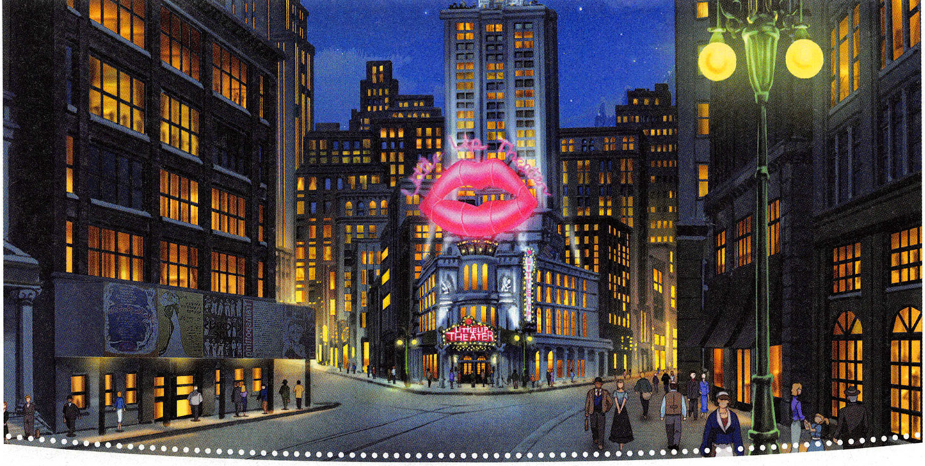
The overall look and feel seem very different than other Hudson titles. Was that a conscious effort on the team's part, and were there any unique challenges in trying to create a game that's outside of what Hudson is known for?
There are no higher forces at work within Hudson in regards to this. We, as a team, are just lucky enough to be in an environment where we are blessed with a certain amount of freedom in terms of development.

What is your overall goal in creating this game? What would you like players to feel while they play it?
Just to provide something fun that people will play. That's all. You may have heard this a million times before, but if the player's happy, we're happy.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell players about Tower of Shadow?
Every member of our team feels the pain of creation every day, toiling to make this game just a little bit better. If their hard work were to inspire even a little bit of interest [from your readers] it would mean the world to them. I hope you'll give it a chance!

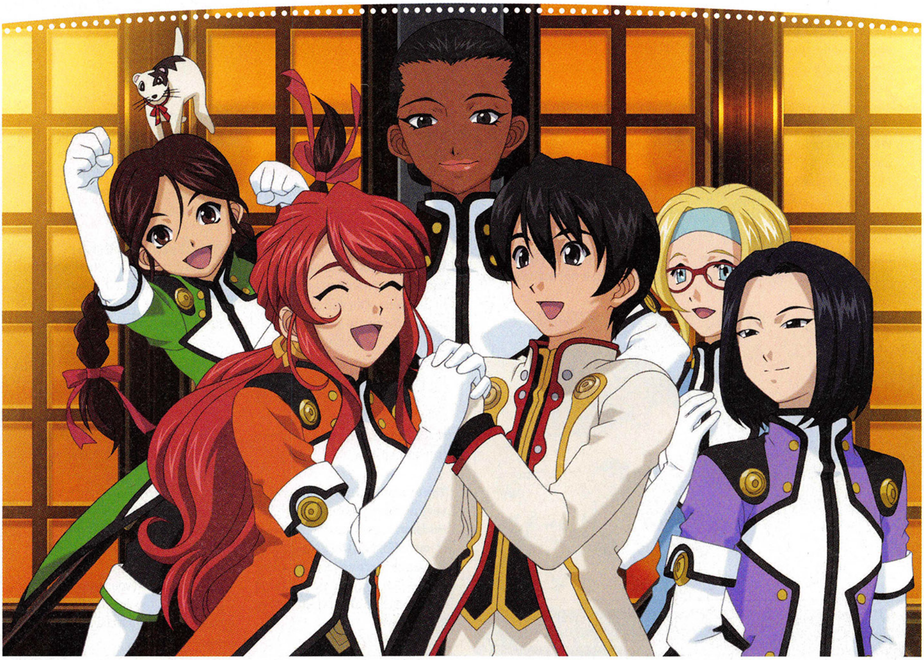


Artwork of an interior area near the beginning of the second stage. Note how the windowed ceiling casts a complex shadow pattern on the ground.


Little Lip Theater
LITTLE LIP THEATER

THEATER *of* WAR

If you're a lover *and* a fighter, NIS America wants you to enlist in **SAKURA WARS: SO LONG, MY LOVE**.



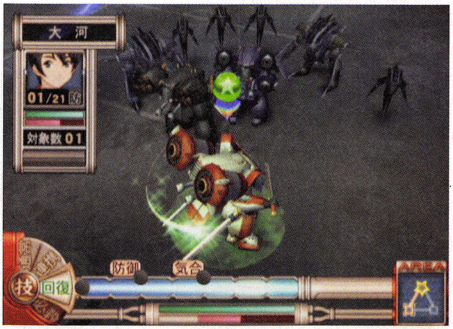
BY CASEY LOE

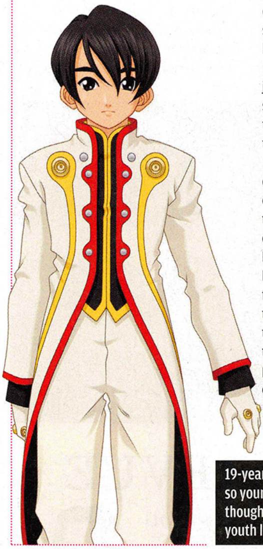
VIDEO GAMES HAVE TAUGHT us a dozen ways to slay a demon. Dante does it with a sword and guns, whereas Simon Belmont prefers a whip and cross. But the strangest method comes from the heroes of the Sakura Wars series: steam-powered mechs and musical theater. As bizarre as it sounds, the combination has become a smash hit for RED Entertainment and Sega, spawning four sequels, a dozen spin-offs, multiple live stage musicals, and enough licensed merchandise to stock two shops in Japan that sold Sakura Wars-related goods *exclusively*. Yet somehow, none of the games ever found their way to Western shores...until now.

Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love is the fifth game in the series, but makes for a surprisingly easy entry point. While the first four titles focused primarily on hero Ichiro Ogami and Japan's demon-battling, opera-performing Imperial Assault Force, So Long, My Love centers on Ogami's nephew and his adventures with America's own mechs-'n'-musicals team, the New York Combat Revue. Besides a few cameos, all of the characters are new to this installment, and you don't need to know much about the backstory; just that it's 1928, the world has joined forces to battle a demon invasion, and the US military has entrusted the job solely to a handful of young singers and actresses. Why? Because performing onstage builds self-confidence and teamwork, you see. And because song and dance help to pacify rampaging demons. It all makes perfect sense if you just...well, OK, it doesn't make any sense at all. But the absurdity of the premise is half of the charm of the Sakura Wars series.

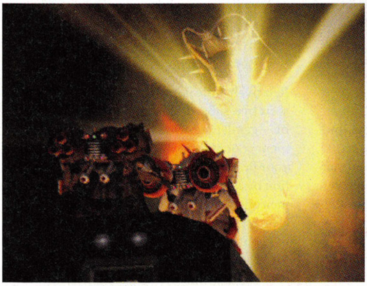
The other half is the cast of characters whom you, as 19-year-old hero Shinjiro Taiga, lead on the twin battlefields of love and combat. Sakura Wars is, at its heart, about the relationships between Taiga and his mostly female combat squad and theater troupe. At first he'll fight to win the troupe members' trust, and then to guide them through personal challenges of their own. If you say and do the right things, your relationships will strengthen, which will boost the power of your team attacks and determine who Shinjiro ends up with in the finale.

Sakura Wars plays out like a traditional adventure game, but attempts to simulate real conversations by giving you a choice of things to say and only a few seconds in which to make a selection. For instance, when you come across law-and-order-loving Cheiron in the midst of an argument with a stranger, it's reasonable to assume that she won't be impressed if you threaten her opponent with violence. But with only a few seconds to make the call, it's easy to let your instincts get the better of you and end up with a foot in your mouth. As an adventure game, Sakura Wars has plenty of other good ideas, such as actually letting you walk freely around small chunks of New York, and offering a great deal of freedom in letting you choose how to approach each situation. When you need someone to





19-year old Shinjiro looks so young that Cheiron thought he was violating youth labor laws. Ouch.



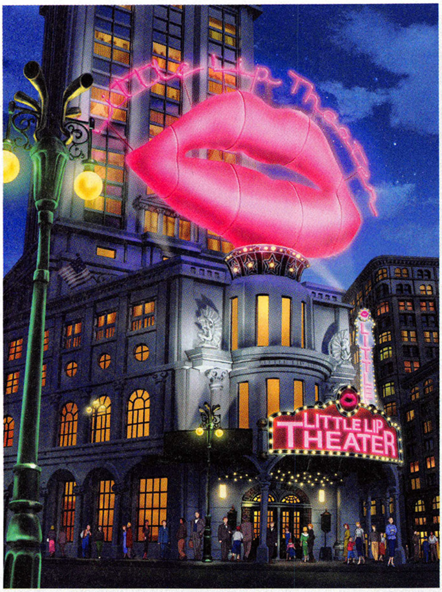
PLATFORM **Wii** | PUBLISHER **NIS AMERICA** | DEVELOPER **IDEA FACTORY** | RELEASE **NOVEMBER 2009** show you to a new part of the city, for example, you can rope almost any of the ladies into it, and the events will unfold quite differently depending on whom you choose.

But Shinjiro didn't hop a boat from Tokyo just to socialize with a bunch of teenage divas. At the end of each of the game's episodic chapters, a demon will reveal itself, and it'll be time to hit the battlefield to protect the Statue of Liberty, the slums of Harlem, or some other New York landmark. Each member of the Combat Revue has a steam-powered mech, and will follow Taiga's orders as he commands them to maneuver around the battlefield, unleash special attacks, and leap to each others' defense. It's here that the relationships you've forged on the stage and in the conversation segments come into play, as you'll need to use top-notch teamwork to keep all of your ladies alive. The new twist to So Long, My Love is that the mechs can transform into supersonic aircraft, allowing you to pursue fleeing demons into the skies of Manhattan for climactic boss fights. Man, steam technology and musical theater really are the answer to everything.

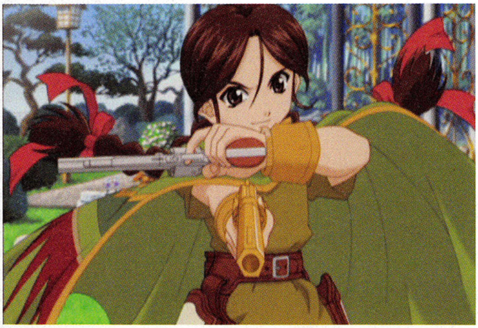
SO LONG, INDEED

There's no big mystery as to why it's taken over a decade for a Sakura Wars game to find its way to Western shores. Indeed, it's a shock that it's happened at all. After Sega repeatedly passed on localizing the franchise, NIS America secured the foreign-publishing rights and hired Japanese developer Idea Factory to port this installment from the PlayStation 2 to the Wii console. The Wii version will use the same assets but offer a few new twists, such as allowing you to aim Shinjiro's instant camera by pointing the Wii Remote controller instead of using an analog stick.

As if having to port the whole game weren't trouble enough, NIS America had to translate over 70,000 lines of text and 10,000 voiceovers, making it the largest localization job in the company's history. Nevertheless, NIS

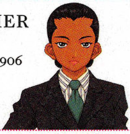


Rosita wants food, and she wants it now. Better feed her—I don't like where she's pointing that gun!



~ *The* NEW YORK COMBAT REVUE ~

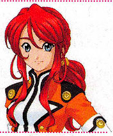
CHEIRON ARCHER



AGE 21
BIRTHDAY December 6, 1906
HEIGHT 5'11"
WEIGHT 149 lbs.
FROM New York, USA

Cheiron grew up on the mean streets of Harlem, and managed to work her way through school and into a law degree. She's still practicing law from her Harlem office, as well as performing musical theater every night and battling a demon or two after that. As you might imagine, that doesn't leave her with a lot of free time to take sass from Shinjiro, so you'd better mind your manners—and the law—when Cheiron is around.

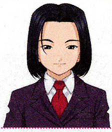
GEMINI SUNRISE



AGE 16
BIRTHDAY June 21, 1911
HEIGHT 5'1"
WEIGHT 105 lbs.
FROM Texas, USA

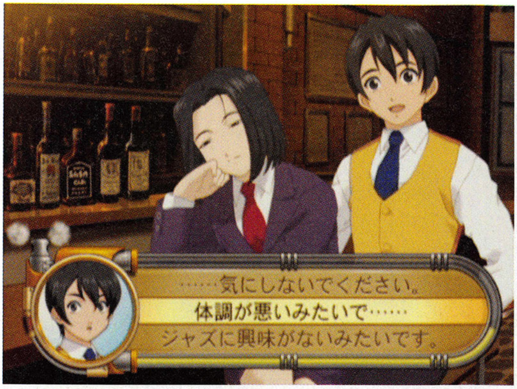
You think your Manhattan apartment is cramped already? Try sharing it with a horse. Gemini is a sweet 16-year-old from Texas, and she's keeping it real, southwest-style, with her white stallion, cowboy hat, and...samurai sword? Like Shinjiro, Gemini's going to have to prove herself as a theater janitor before she can become a full member of the revue. But Japanese fans knew that Gemini has what it takes—she's already starred in a prequel to So Long, My Love.

SUBARU KUJOU

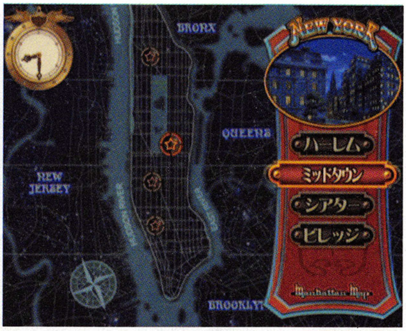


AGE unknown
BIRTHDAY May 9, 19??
HEIGHT 4'6"
WEIGHT 74.9 lbs.
FROM Kyoto, Japan

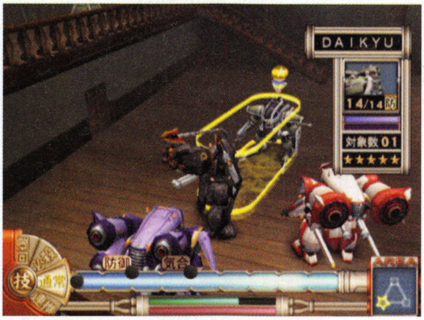
Relatively little is known about the intensely secretive Subaru. That includes even her—or his—gender, which is a mystery that will torment poor Shinjiro throughout the game. On your first meeting, Subaru shrugs off the question by saying that, "the difference between men and women is merely plumbing," and clearly enjoys the fact that everyone is much too polite to demand a direct answer. A cultured and intelligent person, Subaru's above-it-all refinement often comes off as arrogance.



……気にしないでください。
体調が悪いみたいで……
ジャズに興味がないみたいです。



New York, New York, it's a hell of a town!

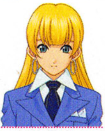


America's Ryuta Sato promises that they haven't skimped on the voice work, and have diligently re-recorded every last line of spoken dialogue. "Our localization team put in a lot of time on this title because we know that there is a huge fan base for the Sakura Wars series, and we wanted to make sure everything was perfect," Sato explains. (No word yet on the English casting, but Sato teases that fans of the Disgaea series will hear plenty of familiar voices.) Two lengthy voice tracks would be impossible to cram into a single disc, but if you'd prefer to play the game with the original Japanese voices, NIS America still has you covered. They're offering a premium-box version of the game with two discs; one with the English voice track, one with the original Japanese voice track, and an additional bonus item that has yet to be announced.

That's a phenomenal amount of trouble for what seems like an awfully fringe game, but Sato is convinced that America is ready for Sakura Wars. Translated versions of the Sakura Wars anime and manga have drummed up interest in the series, and with character designs by Kosuke Fujishima of *Oh My Goddess!* fame and plenty of film-quality animation, Sato believes the game will appeal even to anime fans who aren't familiar with the source material. The adventure-game genre has long been considered a tough sell in the states, but series like Phoenix Wright have defied similarly tough odds and found passionate Western audiences. And it bears repeating that unlike a lot of the adventure games that do find their way here, Sakura Wars is a massive franchise in Japan, and has top-notch production values to match.

The curtain is set to rise on the Sakura Wars series when So Long, My Love releases later this fall. If it flops, I fear it's the last we'll ever see of the series' steam-powered mechs and troubled ingénues. But if it opens to a packed house, there's no end to the Sakura Wars games, animated series, novels, and merchandise waiting in the wings.

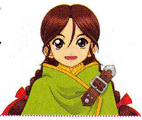
RATCHET ALTAIR



AGE 21
BIRTHDAY June 23, 1906
HEIGHT 5'6"
WEIGHT 108 lbs.
FROM Washington, D.C., USA

Ratchet previously appeared in one of the Sakura Wars animated series, and therefore knows a great deal about your uncle, Ichiro Taiga of the first four Sakura Wars games. Having been taught the qualities of leadership by him and the other heroes of the Japanese Combat Troupe, Ratchet leads the revue with an open heart and a steady hand. Lately, however, something seems off about her.... It may be time for her to pass the reins of leadership to someone new.

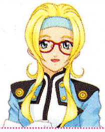
ROSITA ARIES



AGE 11
BIRTHDAY April 4, 1917
HEIGHT 3'9"
WEIGHT 46.2 lbs.
FROM ???, Mexico

Rosita has somehow attained a reputation as a masterful bounty hunter despite the fact that she's only 11 years old. She travels with two guns—one gold and one silver—and a pet ferret named Noko. Rosita is obsessed with food, and woe befalls those who stand between her and a meal. She's a crack shot with those guns, and isn't shy about using them in every possible situation. She's awfully cute, but make no mistake—Rosita is trouble through and through.

DIANA CAPRICE



AGE 19
BIRTHDAY January 12, 1909
HEIGHT 5'3"
WEIGHT 92.6 lbs.
FROM Massachusetts, USA

Diana is a kind and gentle girl, often found feeding the birds in Central Park. She's a graduate of MIT medical school but is herself a victim of a vague, video-gamey disease that has robbed her of the ability to walk. But being stuck in a wheelchair hasn't diminished her capacity for kicking demon ass, nor her positive attitude and supportive nature. Pursuing her feels like dating your own mom, but I'm sure that appeals to someone, somewhere.

head case

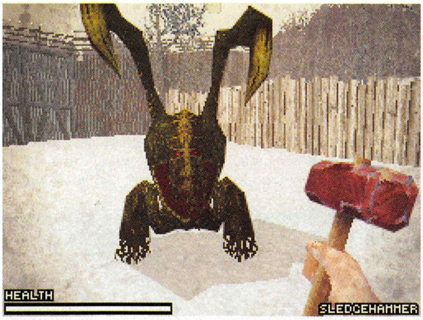
Welcome to the Bright Dawn Treatment Center, where **Dementium II** gives new meaning to "experimental therapy."

BY STEVE THOMASON

"PATIENT HAS SURVIVED PHASE 1. PREPARE FOR PHASE 2." Thus proclaims the foreboding voiceover that opens Dementium II, a direct sequel to 2007 cult favorite Dementium: The Ward. Five weeks have passed since the events of the first game, which players learned (spoiler alert!) took place entirely within the mind of psychiatric patient William Redmoor. Our protagonist has finally woken from some sort of radical brain operation, and finds himself confined to the Bright Dawn Treatment Center but with no memory of how he got there. Despite its sanguine name, this clandestine facility isn't exactly a cheerful place—the dilapidated rooms are more like prison cells, the walls are stained with blood (expect a Mature rating), and medical ethics seem low on the list of faculty concerns. Understandably, William isn't too keen on sticking around for Phase 2.

Like its predecessor, Dementium II unfolds from a first-person perspective. You move via the Control Pad (or face buttons if you're left-handed) and look by dragging the stylus across the touch screen. New for the sequel, you can also crouch and jump by tapping the corresponding panels on the left and right sides of the screen, respectively. After William has been dragged back to his cell, a siren goes off and things turn from bad to worse as the world inexplicably transforms into a nightmarish torment realm. "My main focus for Dementium is to establish a really creepy atmosphere and set a tone of threat early on in the game," says producer and game director Jools Watsham, pointing to the Silent Hill series as a source of inspiration. Though this version of Bright Dawn is even less inviting than the "normal" one, its twisted architecture provides an escape route from the holding area (and gives you an opportunity to get acclimated to the controls). Afterward, the torment realm dissipates for the time being and you stumble across your first weapon—a bloody shank, which you can swing by pressing the L Button.

Improving combat has been a major focus for Watsham's team, and what we've played thus far definitely feels more responsive and satisfying than the first game. The shank is fairly effective against the security guards and lesser monsters you'll face early on, but as the threats intensify, you'll find much-needed upgrades like a shotgun and a makeshift flamethrower (crafted from a lighter and an aerosol can). And unlike in the previous installment, you can now carry your flashlight and a weapon at the same time (as long as the armament requires only one hand). Also new is the option to store health kits, adrenaline shots, and other items for later use. "I think giving the player the ability to carry items simply makes sense in a game of this type," opines Watsham. "Items are still scarce in Dementium II, as they were in the first game, but having the ability to carry and use these items when you wish helps the player focus on other important aspects of the game." Like getting the heck out of Dawn.

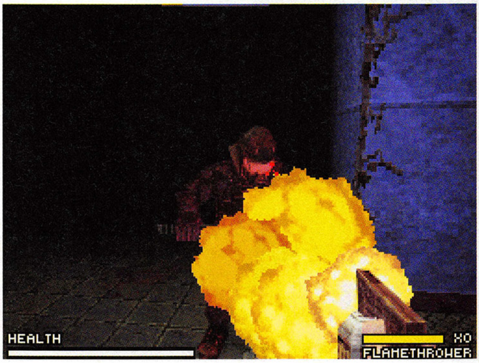


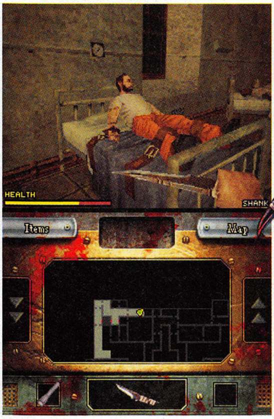
Your first objective is to escape the treatment center, and to help you navigate, a Castlevania-style map occupies the center of the touch screen. "The map is another one of the changes from Dementium: The Ward to Dementium II that's all about improving the player's experience," explains Watsham. "I wanted the map system to help tell you where you are, where you've been, and what points of interest you've discovered along the way that you may need to revisit." Coupled with the fact that enemies no longer respawn, this new map system allows for a greater emphasis on exploration. One example especially reminiscent of Castlevania is a doorway that's been boarded up. You can see a stash of ammo and health-replenishing items on the other side, but since you can't get through, the doorway will be marked red on your map. Later you'll obtain a sledgehammer that lets you smash such barricades, and the map makes it easy to find your way back to retrieve the goodies.

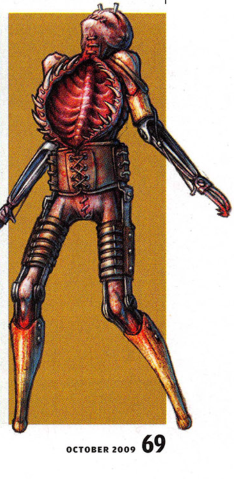
Lunatic Fringe

Of course, Dementium II's primary concern is scaring the bejeezus out of you. On that front, it takes a two-pronged approach. The in-your-face scares come from an assortment of truly disgusting monstrosities. Asked to name some of the team's sources of inspiration, art director Gregg Hargrove offers, "*Hellraiser*, *In the Mouth of Madness*,

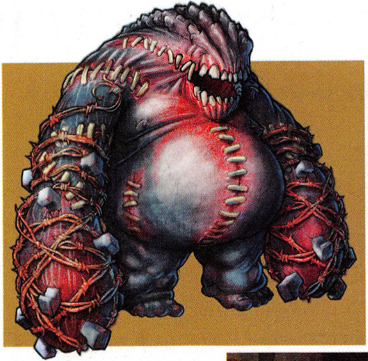
[Right] Your fellow inmates are less than thrilled with Bright Dawn's accommodations. [Below] Anyone got some marshmallows?

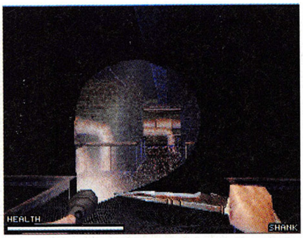






PLATFORM **NINTENDO DS** | PUBLISHER **SOUTHPEAK** | DEVELOPER **RENEGADE KID** | RELEASE **FEBRUARY 2010**





[Above] The flashlight effect is pretty impressive. [Below] Don't tase me, bro!

and historical medical references. Early prosthetics and surgical procedures are easily twisted into something uncomfortably gruesome." The bosses are especially horrendous—one early example is a big, toothy beast that crawls along the ceiling and vomits eggs, which in turn hatch bloodthirsty slugs the size of badgers.

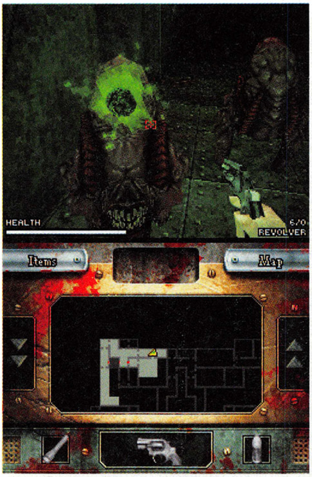
Between bouts of hacking away at vile abominations, the game works at getting under your skin by creating a pervasive sense of unease. You never know when William's reality might revert to the torment realm, and everything just feels dirty and dingy and uncomfortable. Creating something moody on the Nintendo DS handheld is a tall order, but it helps that developer Renegade Kid has a history of squeezing extraordinary visuals from the diminutive hardware. "We're fortunate enough for this to be our third title using our Renegade Engine," says Watsham. "We are now able to focus 100% of our energy on Dementium II's creative content, and not worry so much about the engine and such. We're a very optimistic team, and we always shoot for the stars. We are constantly surprised that our lofty goals can be realized on the DS. It's a combination of trying ambitious things and having great team members who are very skilled at what they do." The audio plays a big part in drawing you in, as well, from the incoherent ramblings of the other patients to the harsh screech of Bright Dawn's public-address system. Though fairly minimalistic, the discordant soundtrack is suitably unnerving and intensifies to warn you of approaching enemies.

That our protagonist has no recollection of what the heck is going on makes the whole thing even more unsettling. The story unfolds via memos, news clippings, and other assorted clues that you find lying about, but the revelations are rarely pleasant. William's patient file, for instance, alleges that he murdered his wife. You'll also discover Postcards from Paradise, which were apparently written by William before he lost his memory, and offer such helpful advice as, "For God's sake, get out before it's too late."

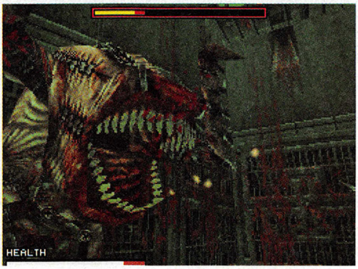
Once you heed those words of wisdom and finally make your escape from the treatment center, you'll find yourself outdoors on a harsh winter's day. The change of scenery is the first of many, another welcome break from the first game. "*Variety* is the single word that has kept ringing in my head throughout the development of Dementium II," comments Watsham. "There are multiple locations for the player to explore that are significantly different from each other."

While discussing improvements over the original Dementium, Watsham is quick to point out that his team has also addressed the much-maligned save system. "It was never our intention to make the first game all hardcore and difficult with the save system," he insists. "For Dementium II, we have adopted a simple manual save system. There are multiple save points located at advantageous spots throughout the game. The player won't have to go too far without being able to save their progress."

For all the talk of its flaws, the first Dementium was a very solid effort, and remains one of the few games to pull off horror effectively on a handheld. But the developers have obviously learned from experience, and are prepared to take the series to the next level. "We learned lots," Watsham says with a laugh. "We learned that we needed to improve some things, and we also learned that we did some things right in the first game. I read everyone's feedback, on all of the forums and reviews, to see what the main likes and dislikes were of the first game. Our focus for Dementium II from the beginning was to capitalize on what worked in Dementium: The Ward, and discard or improve what did not. We wanted to stay true to the foundation that we created with the first game. We didn't feel it was necessary to reinvent the game—just make it better." Judging by what we've seen thus far, they're well on their way.



[Above] We're not sure what these are, but they're ugly and need to be shot.



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Mat Classic

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010 gets back to basics and promises to bring the most robust wrestling experience yet to Wii and DS.

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

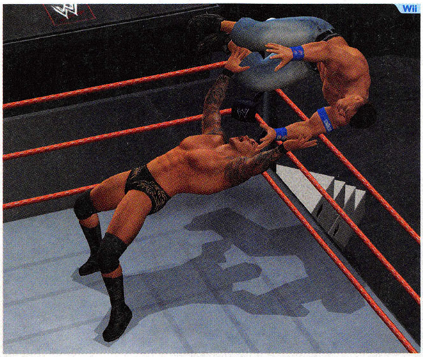
Sometimes the gimmicks in wrestling just have to go. Back in the '80s and early '90s, pro wrestling was full of wrestling policemen, clowns, roosters, tax agents, and the like. Today, not so much. THQ's hit video game series, WWE SmackDown vs. Raw, is following the same trend—instead of focusing on novel control schemes, the 2010 version of the franchise is rooted in traditional action, solid simulation-style gameplay, and a wealth of features. And as Hunter Hearst Helmsley could tell you after dropping his "Connecticut blueblood" gimmick and becoming Triple H, sometimes the straightforward approach is best.

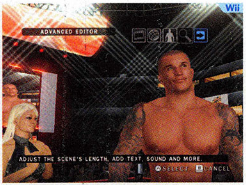
The Complete Package

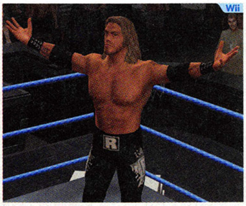
For the Wii console version of WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010—developed by Yuke's—the focus on a more traditional wrestling experience means that the motion controls from the last two entries in the series are history. No more motion-based grapples or strikes, and no more posing like your favorite superstars as you enter the ring or taunt your opponent. Instead, gamers will be treated to simple and effective (albeit conventional) controls. Though the interface using the Wii Remote controller is still being determined, the game works brilliantly using the Classic Controller and the GameCube controller. Like in versions of the game on other systems, you activate various quick grapple moves by pressing different directions on the right analog stick (C Stick if you're using a GameCube pad), and by holding down a modifier button and pushing the right stick, you can initiate strong grapple holds to really lay the smack down on your opponent. Other moves, such as melee attacks, countering, and running, are simply activated via button presses. The result is a much greater control over the actions you perform in the ring.

The deeper move set is just the beginning; the game features many other bells and whistles that were missing from last year's WWE offering, such as a create-a-finishing-move option (including both standing and diving finishers), a stamina system for more-authentic bouts, individual superstar abilities, and more in-ring actions (such as dragging prone opponents and executing moves off the ring apron). You can also expect more than 60 characters (including John Cena, Triple H, Rey Mysterio, Randy Orton, Edge, Kofi Kingston, Chris Jericho, John Morrison, the Undertaker, Mickie James, and Maryse), a wide variety of arenas, a whopping 79 match types (such as single, tag team, first blood, falls count anywhere, and steel cage), and the inclusion of at least one WWE Legend, Stone Cold Steve Austin, who will be a preorder bonus from GameStop stores. The excellent Road to WrestleMania mode from last year's game will be back, too, featuring six distinct storylines, including a women's story and a story for custom characters.

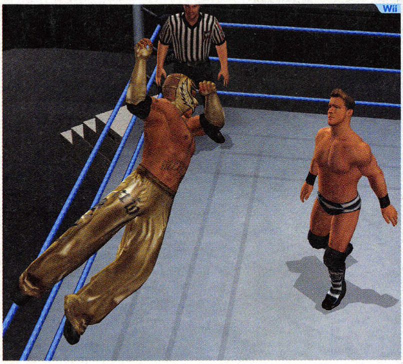
The most exciting feature in SVR 2010, however, may be one that's totally new—the WWE Story Designer. If you've ever thought you could come up with better storylines than what you see on WWE television (or in WWE video games), now's your chance to prove it. As the mode's title implies, it lets you design every aspect of a WWE storyline—you pick the cut-scenes, make the



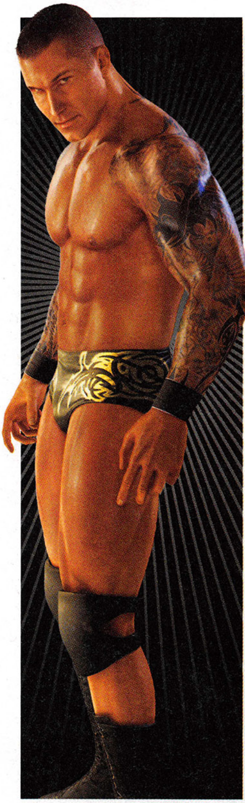


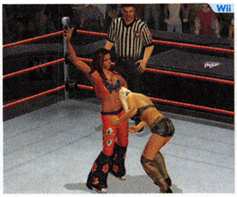


[Left] Edge may be out with an injury in real life, but he's ready to go in the game.

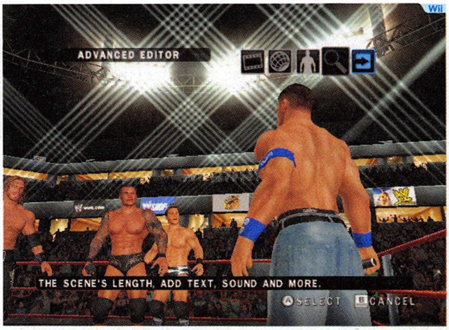


PLATFORMS **Wii, NINTENDO DS** | PUBLISHER **THQ** | DEVELOPER **YUKE'S (Wii), TOSE (DS)** | RELEASE **OCTOBER 2009**





matches, write the dialogue, and more. You can cut promos, hold interviews, and engage in backstage theatrics (including automobile assaults) on any WWE program, and you can choose the participants, the locations, and even the emotions that show on characters' faces. Want to make a superstar interfere during a match, or start a match with one participant already injured? You can do that, too. What the Wii game lacks in motion controls, it appears to more than make up for in other regards.



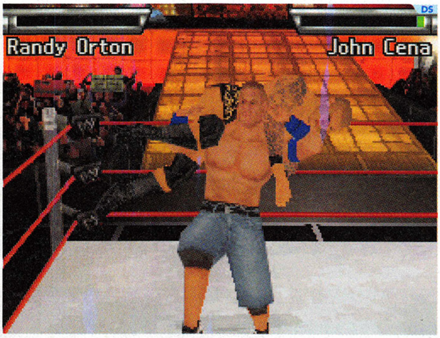
The new Story Designer mode lets you control every aspect of WWE events.

Packing a Portable Punch

Like its Wii counterpart, WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010 for the Nintendo DS handheld is taking a fairly conventional approach to its gameplay. The basic game engine and play mechanics haven't changed much since the last go-round, but the questionable touch-screen controls are out. Your actions are now mapped to the buttons (Y to grapple, B to strike, X to run, and A to interact), and character movement is still handled via the Control Pad. Taking inspiration from time-honored wrestling games such as WWF No Mercy on the N64, tapping Y or B results in a quick, light attack, whereas holding those buttons executes a slow but strong maneuver, and R and L let you block strikes and dodge grapples, respectively. The controls were still a tad sluggish in the early version we played, but if the developers at Tose can increase the responsiveness, it should be a big step up from last year's DS effort.

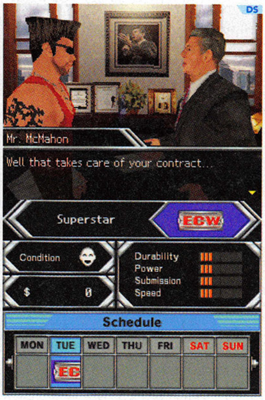
On the other hand, many aspects of the previous WWE game were satisfyingly robust, and in that respect THQ is taking an "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" approach. Players once again have access to a large roster of playable characters (around 30) and a diverse set of match types, including cage matches, ladder matches, table matches, last-man-standing matches, extreme-rules matches, backstage brawls (set within 14 environments, including a parking lot, a hospital, and a construction site), and all-new ambulance matches (in which you must lock your opponent in an ambulance to win). Unfortunately, matches are all one-on-one affairs; tag-team bouts are still absent.

Luckily, the lengthy, intricate



DS
Randy Orton
John Cena

[Right] Interact with NPCs such as WWE chairman Vince McMahon in the DS version's story mode.



Mr. McMahon

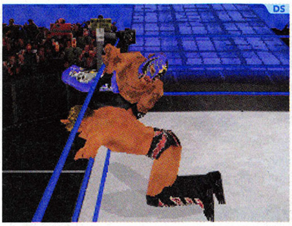
Well that takes care of your contract...

Story mode is fully intact. In this mode you'll take a custom character up through the ranks of WWE, not only participating in matches, but also visiting WWE headquarters, interacting with NPCs, buying new gear to power up your wrestler, and training in the gym. By playing minigames, you'll enhance your character's agility, power, and submission prowess, thus learning new moves. The Story mode spans all three WWE brands (ECW, SmackDown, and Raw) and a lengthy 12 chapters.

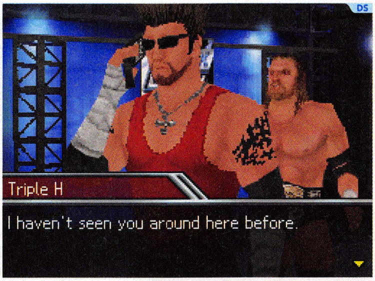
Additionally, by completing objectives in Story mode and in exhibition bouts you'll unlock in-game collectible cards. Some of these cards unlock new game content (such as extra arenas or new parts for custom characters) and others provide superstar info. Most important, however, are the 18 Match Cards, which you can utilize during matches for a quick power-up; one card instantly fills your momentum meter, for example, while another calls in a Diva to distract your opponent, and another allows a certain diminutive superstar to run to the ring and pounce on your foe.

Time to Play the Game

Although it's too early to say how the final products will turn out, THQ is putting a lot of thought into WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010 on Wii and DS, as well as a lot of emphasis on creating two distinct titles packed with features, authenticity, and satisfying gameplay. Come this fall, we'll see if the latest WWE endeavors are championship material.

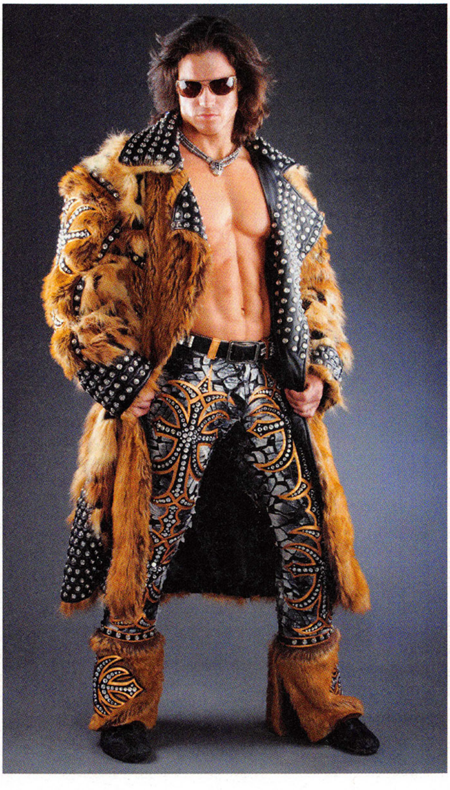


[Above] Improved controls make it easier than ever to dial up Rey Mysterio's 619.



Triple H

I haven't seen you around here before.



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INTERVIEW **JOHN MORRISON**

Straight from the Palace of Wisdom

One of the most talented rising stars in professional wrestling is John Morrison, who's earned a reputation for having some of WWE's most exciting matches every Friday night on *SmackDown*. Despite having been in the business for only a few years, Morrison has already won WWE tag-team gold on multiple occasions (he held the WWE Tag Team belts with the Miz for more than eight months) and captured the Intercontinental and ECW championships. We recently had a chance to speak with Morrison—who will be a playable character in the Wii and DS versions of WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010—about video games and more.

NINTENDO POWER You were scheduled to come by our office about a year ago with the Miz to demo WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009, but you never arrived. Why were you too scared to show up at Nintendo Power?

JOHN MORRISON I had seen a lot of these [business] cards with these really intense-looking pictures, and there was this one of Chris Hoffman with some glasses and some kind of evil-looking eye thing going on staring at me, and...I was just a little bit weirded out. I had a scare at the airport, and I figured if I showed up, Chris might be pretty pissed, and, you know, I'm a sports entertainer. If I get hurt by Chris Hoffman in San Francisco, I mean, that might end my career. I just couldn't let that happen.

I *was* pretty ticked off. I had to fight the Miz—

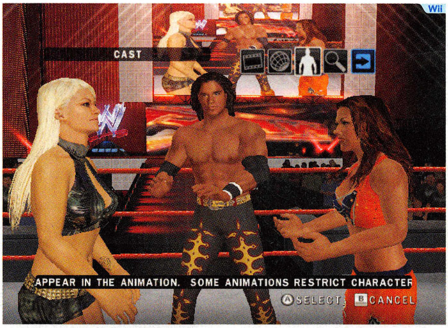
Actually, I understand absolutely why you were pissed off. I'm sorry you had to spend all day hanging out with the Miz. He has that effect on a lot of people. So hopefully a year has gone by and you've cooled down. [laughs]

Well, I defeated him in a ladder match in SmackDown vs. Raw. If you had been there to support him, would the Miz have been

able to take me?
Whatever side I was on would be the winning team. I mean, we would have cheated, maybe unplugged your controller or something, but we would have found a way.

Back when you were on *Tough Enough* (WWE's reality show), did you ever see yourself being immortalized in video games or action figures or whatever?
You know, I didn't really think about the full extent of what would happen if I won *Tough Enough* while I was on the show. I definitely saw myself, like, wrestling and being in front of crowds and performing, but stuff that's awesome, being at E3—and not the crappy version that we had last year, but the real version of E3 that we had this year—is one of those perks where you show up and you're like, "Man, I have the best job ever." It didn't occur to me at the time that this was what I was getting myself into.

So are you a big video game fan yourself?
I'm a huge fan of the SmackDown vs. Raw series, and I played a lot of games growing up, like old-school Nintendo. We're talking Super Mario Bros., Zelda, Punch-Out!!—that kind of stuff.

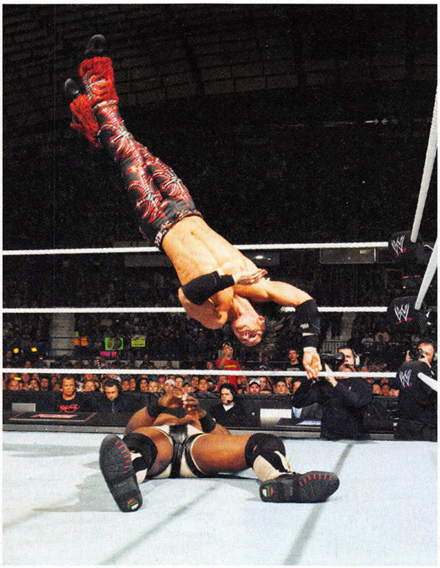


That's us, old-school Nintendo Power—going on 21 years now.
I had to get your magazine to level up in Zelda, [learn] where the secret passages were, the money—all that stuff.

One of the trends in video games recently is fitness games like Wii Fit and EA Sports Active. Since you're known for being in pretty good shape yourself, what do you think about that?
I think Wii Fit is a great concept, and it's obviously proven that a lot of other people think so too. But the Wii Fit stuff—I think we've just scratched the surface with it. You notice I'm saying "we" about Wii Fit? I think *we've* just scratched the surface of Wii Fit—I'm just including myself in the success of Wii technology. But I think it's one of those things where everyone's got the platform and the games are getting better and better, and it's a cool thing—it's kind of the way of the future for fitness.

If we play enough fitness games, will we all be able to develop John Morrison-like abs?
Most people could work out for eight hours a day and still not be John Morrison, so for most people, unfortunately, no.

If someone made John Morrison: The Video Game, what would that game be like?
John Morrison and the Palace of Wisdom. It would be the most awesome thing ever. It'd be John Morrison, kind of a slice-of-life-drama...maybe it'd be kind of post-apocalyptically set, and there'd be me. It'd be like the setting of *The Road,* the Cormac McCarthy novel, with me, kind of scavenging for food, and I'd have this harem of ladies, and they'd be hot, even though there's no food or water or makeup.... And I'd be jumping over ruins and buildings like a ninja, and then like finding groups of evil people or zombies and killing them with my bare hands, taking their food, and then feeding my harem of hot, well-maintained, well-groomed ladies with food, and then we'd just kind of go off from there.



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GUIDANCE FROM THE GURU

Back in Nintendo Power Vol. 231 (August 2008), John Morrison's then-tag-team-partner, the Miz, gave advice to a few Nintendo characters about how they could become chick magnets like the Miz himself. Now Morrison—the self-proclaimed Guru of Greatness—chimes in with tips on how these characters could become as cool as he is.

LUIGI
What I would say [to] Luigi is, start doing some core strengthening. Maybe some German volume training. Some biometric upper-body work. He definitely doesn't need any work on his springs. He's got a really good jumping ability. He's very mobile. But I think if he just builds out his deltoids a bit, maybe his upper pecs, I think he would have more success in life in general. Maybe be a little bit more noticed than his brother.

PIT
Hmm. I think there's a lot of problems. What I think you should do is get some pants. Pants go a long way. Especially if you're walking around in the real world.

CAPTAIN FALCON
You kind of receive what you put out there in the world, and you look like you're kind of pissed off and intense. Maybe if you smiled more, people would like meeting you and like being around you a little bit better.

GANON
You know what they say a lot of times about [how] maybe somebody who's carrying a big sledgehammer with a big nose is trying to compensate for shortcomings? Well I think that this Ganon, with his big sword, is maybe trying to compensate for a shortcoming here or there.

What's that smell?
TOP 7
talk radar
? OF THE WEEK
Originality
TOP 7 EVERY MONDAY
games radar
WHAT'S THAT SMELL? ORIGINALITY
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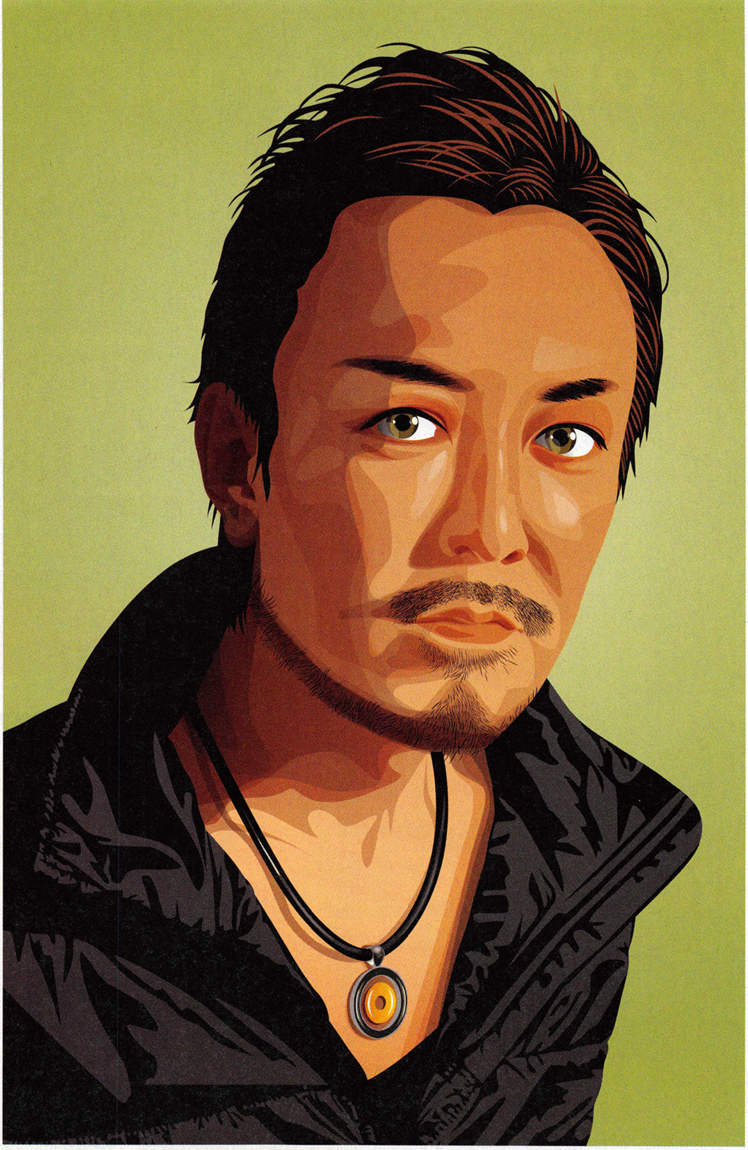
Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
June 17, 1965

BIRTHPLACE
Yamaguchi Prefecture, Japan

POSITION
Research and development creative officer—Consumer Games, Sega

BEST KNOWN FOR
Creating Daytona USA and Super Monkey Ball; sporting the most impressive tan in video games

FAVORITE FOOD
Everything

CURRENT PROJECTS
Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll, Ryu Ga Gotoku 4

Toshihiro Nagoshi

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

For nearly 20 years, Toshihiro Nagoshi has been one of the driving creative forces at Sega. He got his start working at AM2 under legendary arcade maestro Yu Suzuki, contributing to such quarter-munching classics as Daytona USA and Virtua Striker. Given his own team at AM4—later renamed Amusement Vision—Nagoshi demonstrated incredible range as a game designer. He's brought us everything from adorable monkeys rolling around, gathering bananas (Super Monkey Ball) to gritty crime dramas set in real-world Tokyo (Yakuza). Recently, Nagoshi was promoted to research and development creative officer at Sega's Consumer Games division, which means he'll oversee all of Sega's console and handheld titles moving forward.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you first become involved in the video game industry?
TOSHIHIRO NAGOSHI
Originally, I was studying film studies in college, but I could not find any jobs in that field. So instead, I joined a game company since it is still part of the creative industry, and I liked playing games. As I look back now, I am really glad I made that decision.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
I always dreamed of pursuing a career in the creative field. That's why I majored in film studies in college.

Congratulations on your recent promotion! What does your new position entail? Will you still have an opportunity to work on individiual titles directly?
Thank you very much. I supervise the overall R&D for Consumer Games within SEGA. I will also continue to work on individual titles.

What will be your priorities in your new position? Where do you think Sega needs to go moving forward?
The most critical question of priorities I face is balancing my time on the titles I am personally involved with versus my time on Sega's overall consumer lineup. Both are important. On one hand, staying active in game creation allows me to understand the challenges and more effectively produce the entire Sega production line. But on the other hand, I need to do my part to increase the overall quality of all Sega titles. My goal is to first decide on a clear direction for each game, and then to make sure that the development team has all the technical resources and knowledge required to ensure that each game meets its full potential.

Traditionally, what do you think have been Sega's greatest strengths and weaknesses?
Our strength is in the freedom and flexibility we get, but that can potentially become our weakness, as well.

Sega has one of the richest catalogs in the industry. Are there any intellectual properties we haven't seen in a while that you'd like to bring back?
Yes, I have a few titles in mind, but it's not that easy to bring back our classic titles into the market. I think about the reasons we want to revitalize these titles and the development schedules since those are important factors that we need to consider. Yet, to tell you the truth, I would rather release new titles.

You have quite a bit of experience working on arcade titles. Why do you think the popularity of arcades has waned over the years? Do you ever see them making a comeback?
There are many consumer titles available nowadays that offer better graphic quality than some arcade games. If arcades were going to make a comeback, the goal would be to provide an environment that is fun and fresh and cannot be experienced unless you go to the arcades. I've been thinking more about this issue lately.

When we spoke with Yuji Naka, he mentioned that he missed Sega's hardware days. He felt that the hardware battles with Nintendo and Sony provided an extra spark. Do you feel the same?
Yes, I feel the same way. Some of the best games and consoles have come out when there is competition.

In 2000, all of Sega's development studios were divided into individual subsidiaries, with you heading up Amusement Vision. A lot of creative and experimental titles came out of that arrangement. Why do you think that was?
That was a result of Sega's attempt to create separate brands for each branch while they were still under the same company. That was quite an interesting period.

How are things different now that all of the teams have been reintegrated under Sega? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages?
The advantage was that there was a sense of belonging that was recreated within the company once we were reintegrated. As we were all separated once, creators gained knowledge of the business aspects, so the producers returned with more experience and applied their newfound

GAMEOGRAPHY

The diversity of Nagoshi's work is matched only by its consistent quality. Hopefully he can bring those traits to the rest of Sega's lineup as the company's new creative head. We're also keeping our fingers crossed for a new Daytona USA.

BEGINNER MISSION 3
TIME 59s
HIT 3/10

G-LOC: AIR BATTLE
1990, ARCADE
DESIGNER

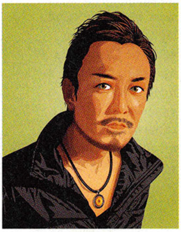
4/8
9
38/40
306 km/h

DAYTONA USA
1994, ARCADE
DESIGNER

SCORE 272
057
BANANA 003/100
17 km/h
FLOOR 1

SUPER MONKEY BALL
2001, GAMECUBE
PRODUCER, DIRECTOR

Power Profiles



knowledge to making games. I cannot think of any disadvantages right now.

Your team worked with Nintendo on F-Zero GX. How did that partnership come about, and what was the experience like?
I am satisfied with the product and it was well received in the Western market. There were a series of discoveries and surprises, as their process and philosophy towards game creation was different from ours, even though we are both game companies. I have learned a lot from them and they told us the same.

Are you interested in pursuing similar collaborations in the future? Are there any other Nintendo properties in particular that you'd like to work on?
For now, I am very busy with a few titles of my own, but if I ever get another opportunity, I would definitely consider it.

Where did the idea for Super Monkey Ball come from?
This game came out of a few key concepts, like how do we make a game that is simple enough yet can still challenge your mind. The project itself was under consideration for a long time. The idea of placing a monkey inside a ball just came off the top of my head.

How much have you been involved with the development of Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll for the Wii console?
As the executive producer, I decide everything from which modes we implement to the level of difficulty in the game.

It seems like core games, especially new IPs, are having a difficult time catching on in Japan these days. Yet you've enjoyed tremendous success with Ryo Ga Gotoku (known as Yakuza in the US). Why do you think that is, and what are your thoughts on the current state of the Japanese video game market?
Ryu Ga Gotoku was successful because we narrowed down the target demographic. We deliberately ignored the global markets, as well as kids and female gamers. This allowed the game to be edgy and compelling in ways it couldn't have been if we tried to go after all those markets. This was a huge risk, but it was worth the challenge. At the moment, the Japanese video game market is not doing so well. Most titles are pursuing the opposite strategy—trying to recoup high development costs by attempting to expand the market for each title rather than narrowing down and focusing on a specific demographic. Don't get me wrong; I don't think this strategy is a mistake. It's a good thing for games to appeal to consumers in different countries, across generations, and to both men and women. However, I do worry that if everyone follows this strategy, it will reduce the variety of titles in development.

> *"Our strength is in the freedom and flexibility we get, but that can potentially become our weakness, as well."*

Which of your games are you most proud of, and why?
Daytona USA, because I learned so many things from that title.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
When the game becomes a hit. It is the moment you feel that your philosophy was accepted.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while developing a game, what's your process for working through it?
It depends on the nature of the problem. It could be something technical or more to do with relationships, but since I have 20 years of experience dealing with the different issues, it's easy to find solutions. The best way to deal with a problem is to analyze the problem critically, and to find and solve the underlying cause of it, because the same problem will happen again if the issue has not been solved completely.

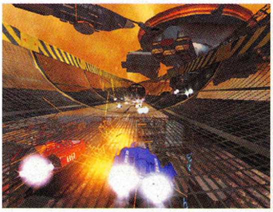
What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
I dig all classic masterpieces, but if I were to pick one, it would have to be Super Mario and Shigeru Miyamoto. Super Mario is equivalent to the music by The Beatles or The Rolling Stones, and Miyamoto-san would be John Lennon or Mick Jagger in that case. They are the original.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I'll watch movies from any genre, depending on my mood. I like works which deliver the creator's energy through the screen, because I can get more energy from it as a fellow creator.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
That would be my work!

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
I wouldn't want a superpower. It wouldn't be as fun to work at things anymore.

GAMEOGRAPHY



F-ZERO GX
2003, GAMECUBE
PRODUCER

YAKUZA
2006, PLAYSTATION 2
PRODUCER

043:18
300
13
63

SUPER MONKEY BALL STEP & ROLL
2010, Wii
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

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MOST NINTENDO
COVERAGE
DELIVERED TO
YOUR DOOR!

Wii
Punch-Out!!
NINTENDO POWER
RESIDENT EVIL RETURNS TO Wii
NEW ZELDA! Drive a train and command enemies in The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks for Nintendo DS!
NINTENDO POWER
MARIO & SONIC TOGETHER AGAIN!
The dynamic duo re-team for the Olympic Winter Games on Wii and DS
PUNCH-OUT!! BLOWOUT
RED STEEL 2
FINALLY, wielding a sword in a Wii game feels as real as you'd always dreamed!
BOOM BLOX: BASH PARTY
NINTENDO POWER
FIRE EMBLEM: SHADOW DRAGON
MARIO & LUIGI RPG 3
SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DEVIL SURVIVOR
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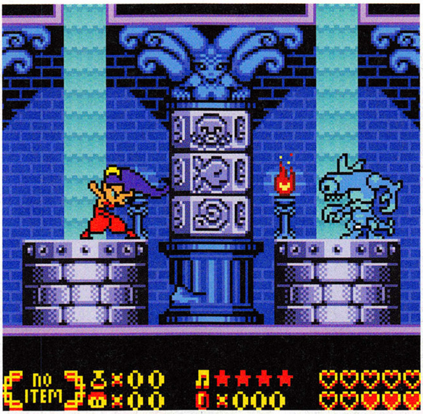
SHANTAE

GAME BOY COLOR
Shantae
CAPCOM

If you want a fantastic platformer, your wish is granted.

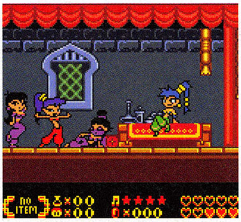


If break-dance movies have taught us anything, it's that all of life's problems can be solved by busting a move.

PLATFORM: GAME BOY COLOR
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: WAYFORWARD TECHNOLOGIES
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 2002
COVERED IN ISSUES: 152, 153
NUMBER OF TEETH IN RISKY'S SKELETAL OUTFIT: 7

A couple of months ago, we interviewed Matt Bozon, creative director at WayForward Technologies. During the interview, we briefly talked about Shantae, the game that put WayForward on the map. Shantae deserves more than a passing mention, though, so this month we're taking a deeper look at this title.

Released by Capcom in 2002, Shantae was a Game Boy Color game that had the unfortunate timing of being released roughly a year after the Game Boy Advance hit the market. Despite plenty of glowing reviews, many gamers had moved on to Nintendo's updated handheld system, leaving Shantae to fly under a lot of gamers' radar.



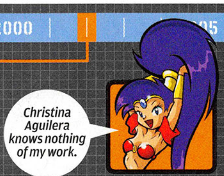
The game is a platformer in which you control the half-genie Shantae. She's the guardian of Scuttle Town, and her adventure begins when her home turf is attacked by saucy female pirate Risky Boots. Risky swipes an experimental steam engine that she intends to put to nefarious use.

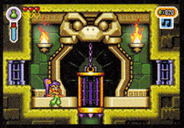
It's a goofy plot, and it's helped along by the charming character designs, beautifully animated sprites, and clever dialogue. Shantae knows it's a silly game, and it's not afraid to revel in that fact. Things get even goofier when Shantae meets up with her dim-witted pal Bolo, and Rottytops, perhaps the only zombie ever who could be accurately described as adorable.

At the start of the adventure, Shantae is armed with only her hair, which she cracks like a whip. As you progress through the game, she'll also learn how to dance. Different dances transform Shantae into various animals, each one with abilities that allow her to access new areas.

Despite being a Game Boy Color title, the cartridge detects when it is being played on the Game Boy Advance. As a special bonus, GBA owners are treated to an enhanced color palette and an exclusive dance that lets Shantae morph into a Tinkerbat, one of Risky Boots's fiendish minions.

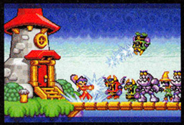
Shantae has become a valuable collector's item over the years, and these days it can be tough to track down a copy. Even so, if you love platformers, you owe it to yourself to play this one. —**PHIL T.**


Christina Aguilera knows nothing of my work.



ADVANCE DANCE

Now *this* is what we would call a lost treasure. For years now, WayForward has had a partially developed Shantae sequel in the works. It was originally planned to come out on Game Boy Advance, but unfortunately, no publisher stepped up to release the darn thing. The fairly expansive demo version of the game consisted of around two hours of gameplay and spanned multiple environments, including a lighthouse, a forest world, and a labyrinth, and—as you can see from the screenshots that WayForward has released—the game looks positively gorgeous. If the animation and gameplay are as good as those of the original, we're missing out on something special. Maybe if we cross our fingers and wish really hard, we'll see it someday.



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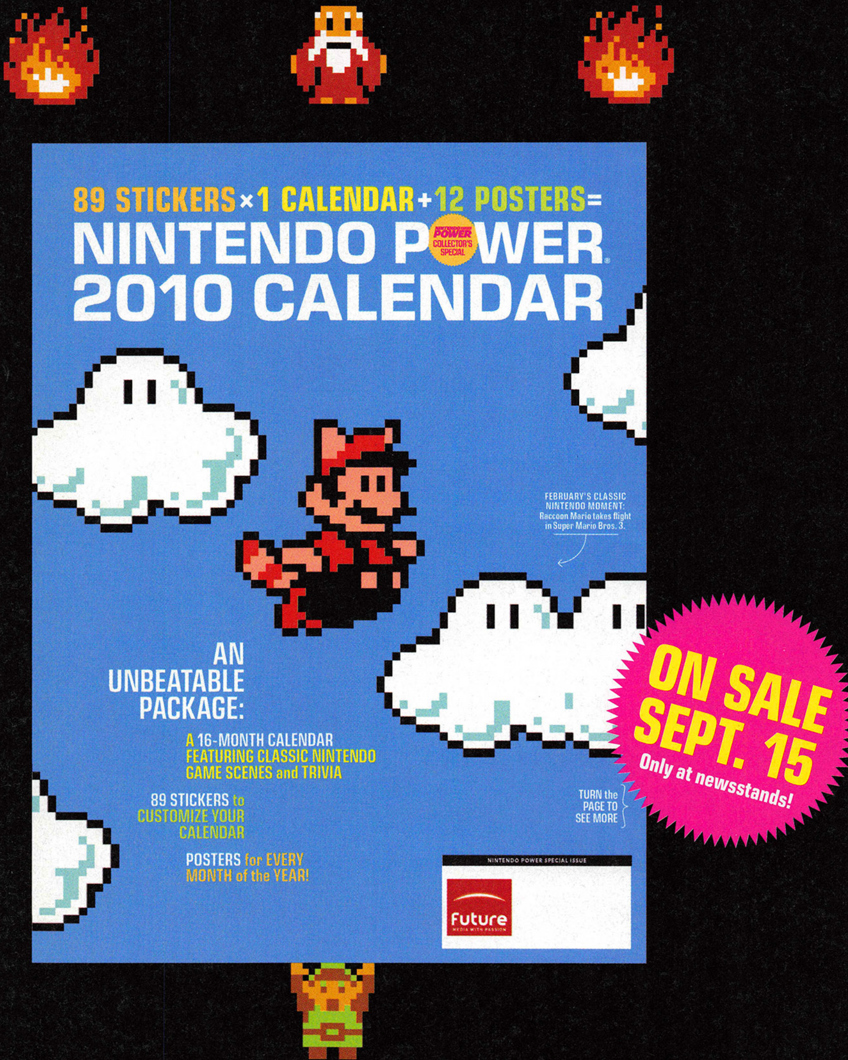

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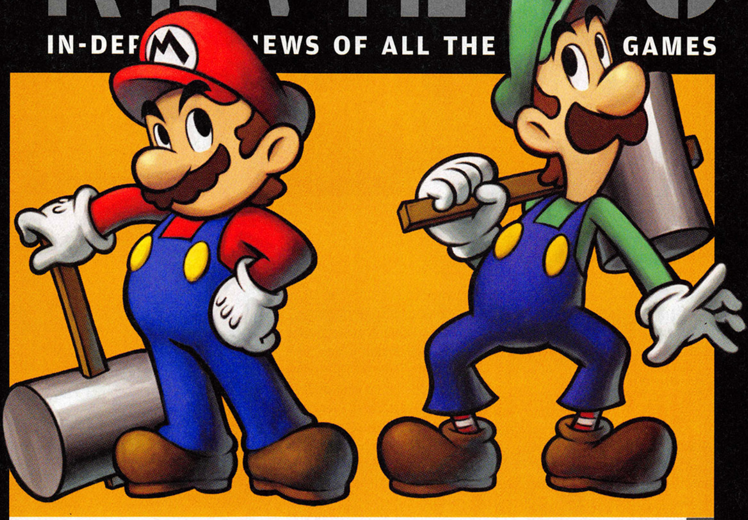
REVIEWS

IN-DEP EWS OF ALL THE GAMES

Just how good is **Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story**? Upon completing his review, editor in chief Chris Slate tried (and failed) to grow a Mario-worthy mustache.

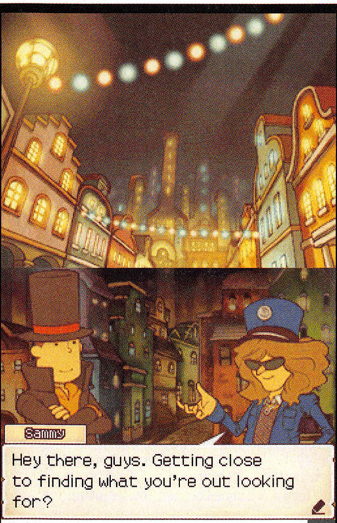


MARIO & LUIGI: BOWSER'S INSIDE STORY 86

138 125
1
Crescent
Bamboo Flask x 3
8 Combo!

MURAMASA: THE DEMON BLADE 88

FOSSIL FIGHTERS 90



Sammy

Hey there, guys. Getting close to finding what you're out looking for?

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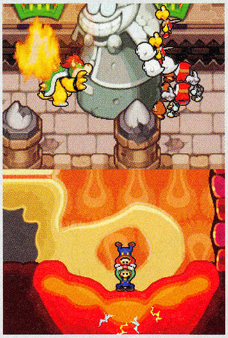
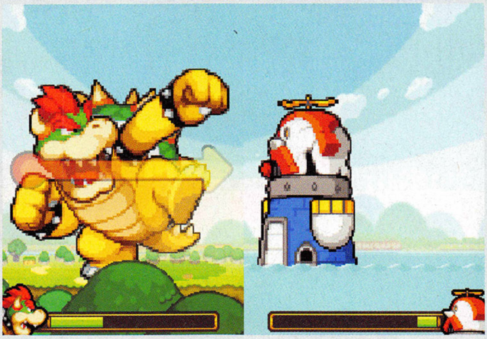




Inside Job

MARIO & LUIGI: BOWSER'S INSIDE STORY

RATING: 9.5

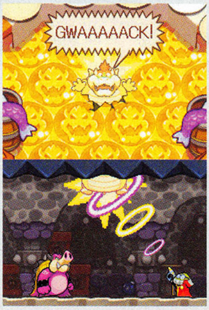
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO/ALPHA DREAM**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

It should come as no surprise that a fantastic series has produced another great installment, but what *is* a bit of a shock is just *how* mind-blowingly great Bowser's Inside Story is. In this reviewer's opinion, this is the best RPG-style Mario adventure ever made, topping both previous Mario & Luigi games as well as the titles in the series's console counterpart, the Paper Mario franchise. With a great new hook, an abundance of humor and charm, and loads to do, explore, and manage, it's very likely that we're looking at the 2009 Game of the Year for the Nintendo DS system.

Bowser's Inside Story presents an endless series of little satisfactions; you're constantly prompted to interact with the game in some way, from performing simple tasks such as jumping a pit, blowing fire to clear out trees, diving into the dirt to unearth a quick reward, and punching through boulders, to engaging in a wide array of unique minigames that seamlessly blend into the action. You can't take more than a few steps without having to push a button or flick the stylus in some way, which makes this one of the most interactive role-playing games available. This is especially true during combat, when the player is challenged to perfectly time a button press whenever he attacks or is attacked. Every type of foe has unique moves that can be dodged or counterattacked, and mastering the required timing is gratifying in the same way as discovering the proper method to win a fight in Punch-Out!! This results in a battle system that stays fun and fresh, and rarely feels like a chore or a distraction. Enemies are visible on the world map and can be avoided, which further gears the game toward action-minded players that may lack the patience needed to play traditional RPGs.

Role-playing fans shouldn't worry about a watered-down experience, however, as the game delivers plenty of engrossing stat management, exploration, and storytelling, with plenty of opportunities to customize their characters' skills, attributes, and battle strategies. Here again the game does an amazing job of keeping the player engaged, as every menu sizzles with flare and every button press is accented with just the right sound.

What really sets this game apart from its predecessors is its structure, which splits play time between Bowser (on the top screen) with Mario and Luigi (on the bottom screen), who most often explore inside Bowser's body while the Koopa king adventures in the Mushroom Kingdom. The game requires that all three characters work together in ingenious ways. For example, at one point the bros. must find and battle a bug that is blocking Bowser's ability to breathe fire, and they often must stimulate Bowser's muscles through timing-based minigames to give him a needed boost of power. The world inside of Bowser is traversed with welcome 2-D Mario-style platforming, and requires a lot of compelling puzzle-solving.



The game is heavy on story; there isn't much to the overall plot other than the usual save-the-princess/save-the-world requirements, but the dialogue is absolutely fantastic—another award category in which this game will certainly be a nominee. This series, and especially this installment, feature my favorite versions of the Mario cast. Luigi especially is at his most entertaining, as a cowardly goofball that nonetheless comes through in a pinch. Whether sleeping through a Mario-Bowser brawl, getting himself stuck inside a giant shoe, or flubbing a hat flip on his level-up screen, Luigi delivers big-time laughs. But the real star of the game is Fawful, the manic villain whose questionable grammar and ridiculous threats make him the most quotable video game character of all time. And even the bit players have their own distinct voice and brand of humor that make their brief screen time memorable.

It's hard to find anything not to love in Bowser's Inside Story, but I suppose the mazelike structure of the world can be a little confusing to navigate, even when revisiting places you've been before. You eventually find various ways to warp around the world, but the game doesn't lend itself especially well to revisiting after taking some time off. A little bit of potential confusion is a small price to pay, however, for one of the best games to ever hit the DS. Anyone who loves the Mario characters, RPGs, or even action games should absolutely give Bowser's Inside Story a look.

—CHRIS SL.

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT KIND OF PRIZES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH CLUB NINTENDO?

Justin Cheng

Exclusive action figures of all the popular Nintendo characters. How cool would it be to have Link, Mario, Samus, et al sitting on your desk?

Chris Hoffman

I'd like specialized Virtual Console controllers. Not just a Super NES controller like they have in Japan, but replica pads for the Genesis, N64, TurboGrafx, etc.

Casey Loe

North American versions of Another Code: R and Disaster: Day of Crisis. They're already localized for Europe, and everyone loves free games!

Chris Shepperd

How about a Nintendo World Championships NES Game Pak? People seem to really covet it for a game that takes less than seven minutes to play.

Chris Slate

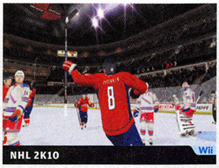
Since I'm daydreaming, I'll pick the Japan-only Rhythm Tengoku for GBA, the predecessor to Rhythm Heaven for DS.

David F. Smith

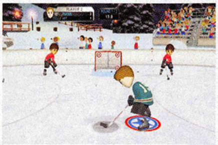
CDs of classic game music. I'd love a collection of old-school Nintendo tunes, especially with new arrangements or remixed versions thrown in.

Steve Thomason

Hmm...I think Justin, Hoffman, and David present equally compelling suggestions, so I'll take all three. I'm a very greedy man.



NHL 2K10



NHL 2K10

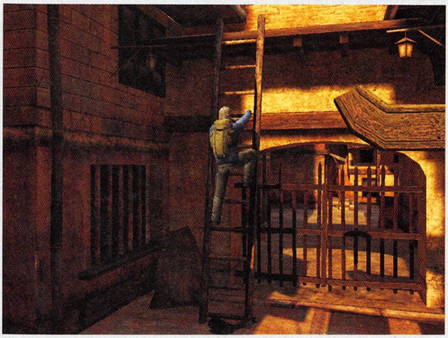
NHL 2K10

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **2K SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **VISUAL CONCEPTS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Last year's NHL 2K9 was solid, but the folks at 2K Sports and Visual Concepts have really stepped up their game with this year's installment. NHL 2K10 is one of the most fully featured sports games on the Wii console. It has an incredibly robust Franchise mode, 4-on-4 pond hockey, custom-team creation, Mii skill challenges, and just about every control option you can imagine, including support for the Wii MotionPlus accessory and the Classic Controller. Best of all, this is the first Wii title from 2K Sports to include online play. And we're not talking just barebones one-on-one matches. Up to 10 players can compete in a game (on up to 10 consoles), plus you've got online leagues, co-op franchise play, downloadable rosters, and compatibility with the Wii Speak accessory. It's a seriously impressive package.

Of course, all the bells and whistles in the world aren't worth much if the on-ice action doesn't measure up. Fortunately, NHL 2K10 delivers a fast-paced, satisfying brand of hockey. Like many of the sport's great players, it's missing a couple of teeth—the AI could still use some work and the animation looks a bit wonky at times—but the rest is all smiles. **—STEVE T.**



Mountain Fearing

CURSED MOUNTAIN

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **DEEP SILVER**
DEVELOPER: **DEEP SILVER**
ESRB: **MATURE**

Survival-horror games are a dime a dozen; games based on mountain climbing, not so much. Cursed Mountain is a lot of the former with some of the latter thrown in—after all, fighting ghosts is scary, but fighting ghosts in a blizzard thousands of feet above the ground? Well, actually, it's not really any scarier.

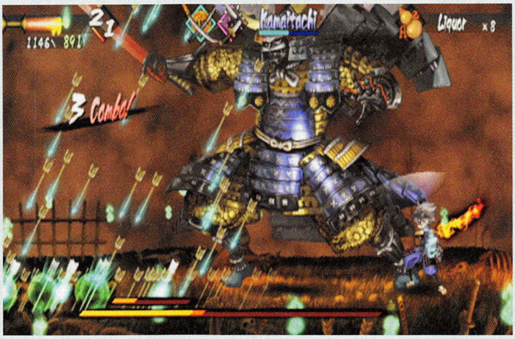
The mountaineering element of Cursed Mountain is more about atmosphere than gameplay. These aren't secret labs or zombie-filled streets. It's the Himalayas: narrow paths, tiny villages, a monastery, and a very unpredictable environment.

You've never experienced this sort of locale over the course of an entire game—base to summit over 13 levels—and it's a refreshing change. There's an interesting story, too, steeped in actual Buddhist lore; it's a shame the dialog and delivery by the voice actors isn't a little better.

There's definitely a sense of dread as you make your way through the Himalayas, searching deserted buildings for any clue that might lead you to your missing brother. The emptiness is somewhat unnerving—and it no doubt helps the game look as nice as it does to not have a bunch of people walking around.

But there are, of course, ghosts. Souls of the dead, trapped in the Buddhist limbo of Bardo. They're spooky at first, but you eventually get used to seeing them wandering around aimlessly, to the point that the game becomes less scary and more like a routine: encounter ghosts, damage ghosts, use motion control "prayer gestures" to banish ghosts.

It may be rated Mature, but the game is fairly tame. Sign up for a trip up the mountain if you're looking for a unique setting and some decent—not great—chills. **—RANDY N.**

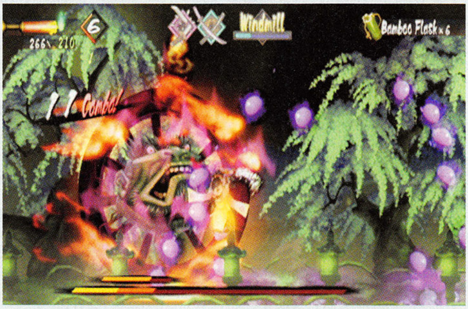


Live by the Sword

MURAMASA: THE DEMON BLADE

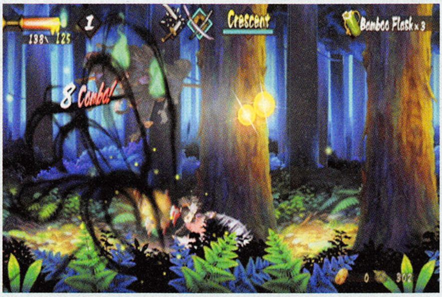
RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **IGNITION ENTERTAINMENT**
DEVELOPER: **VANILLAWARE**
ESRB: **TEEN**



Without question, Muramasa: The Demon Blade is gorgeous. Its 2-D graphics are beautifully illustrated and, when animated, make the game feel like a painting come to life. In just the first hour of gameplay, there were numerous occasions when I just wanted to take a step back from the hack-and-slash action and admire the little details in an environment or on an enormous boss.

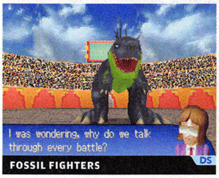
And in that hour, I adored Muramasa. It's hard not to be enthralled by a game that looks so amazing, but it has some solid gameplay backing it up, too. From the very beginning, you're armed with a handful of flashy moves that you can chain together into killer combos. For example, you can knock an enemy into the air, then dash and slash your opponent in midair before you stab downward and land on your falling adversary with your sword. (There's also a screen-filling attack when you swap swords, and each sword, of course, has unique special abilities.) Pulling off these maneuvers is almost effortless; even those who don't usually play action-heavy games will feel like real sword masters.



But the more I played, the more cracks started showing. I found myself relying on the same old attacks because, well, that's all I had available. Unfortunately, you don't learn any moves; you're stuck with what you're given initially. And the swords' individual skills aren't as varied as you might think (many of the 100-plus blades share the same skills or have slight variations). Then I slowly began forgoing trying to do combos, choosing instead—out of laziness—to simply mash buttons; even on the higher of the two difficulty levels, I managed to get through large chunks of the game that way. Adding to the repetition is the fact that the two playable characters—demon-possessed princess Momohime and amnesiac ninja Kisuke—control the same and battle through the same areas. Thankfully, the two leads face different bosses, and their individual stories are compelling enough that I kept playing until I saw all of the multiple endings. (However, the plot can get a bit confusing when names of people and places are thrown at you with little introduction or context.) And while it is possible to button-mash and be successful most of the time, that's not the case in some of the challenging side missions or the unlockable third difficulty level, in which you have just one hit point (and unlike in the other difficulty levels, you can't increase that number by leveling up your character).

Ultimately, I can't say I adore Muramasa: The Demon Blade, but I still like it enough to recommend it. Gameplaywise, it's not quite as deep as it should be (and I'm annoyed that you have to press up on the Control Stick to jump instead of just tapping a button—a small quibble, sure, but bothersome nonetheless), but that doesn't mean it isn't fun to slice and dice baddies. And the title's drool-worthy, you've-got-to-see-it-to-believe-it graphics certainly don't hurt. **—JUSTIN C.**

VALHALLA KNIGHTS: ELDAR SAGA

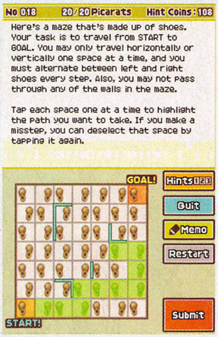

I was wondering, why do we talk through every battle?

FOSSIL FIGHTERS

Status
CO-OP
Screamer
Lv 50
Exp 00
HP 0715/0715
SP 088/088
ATK 033
DEF 020
ACC 049
EVA 029
MOV 6
Speed
PRS
Adjacent Support None
A OK
B Back
Select Target
L
R
DS

BLEACH: THE 3RD PHANTOM

I'm quite puzzled, Katia. What do you know about this man?



Here's a maze that's made up of shoes. Your task is to travel from START to GOAL. You may only travel horizontally or vertically one space at a time, and you must alternate between left and right shoes every step. Also, you may not pass through any of the walls in the maze.

Tap each space one at a time to highlight the path you want to take. If you make a misstep, you can deselect that space by tapping it again.

VALHALLA KNIGHTS: ELDAR SAGA

RATING: 4.0

PLATFORM: **WII**
PUBLISHER: **XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **MARVELOUS ENTERTAINMENT/K2**
ESRB: **TEEN**

It's a shame that Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga has such a slow pace, clunky interface, ugly graphics, sluggish combat, dumb AI, and lackluster overall presentation—there are actually some neat ideas in this action-RPG. For instance, you create a hero, play through his journey, and choose a human, elf, dwarf, or halfling as your mate. Then the game jumps ahead in time, and you continue the adventure as your character's adult offspring. The world itself remains pretty much the same—it's drab in both the past and the future—but reuniting with people and seeing how they've changed over the years can be pretty cool. It's not worth the trouble of playing through the game, though, even if you can share the "fun" with a friend via the Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. **—JUSTIN C.**

FOSSIL FIGHTERS

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **RED ENTERTAINMENT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Pokémon meets *Jurassic Park* isn't far off the mark, but Fossil Fighters is primarily a straightforward RPG. Using the stylus like an archaeologist to chisel chunks of rock and unearth fossils has a satisfyingly tactile feel, but the real fun is in the turn-based battles. The unique battle grid allows for some interesting strategy, because where you place your vivosaurs affects their stats and abilities, and often an arrangement that was advantageous at the start of battle becomes a liability, forcing tense midbattle shuffles.

Although the Fossil Fighters story and battle system may be too simplistic for some, it's a great introduction to RPGs for newcomers. Overall, the game has few flaws but few real challenges. **—CAROLYN G.**

BLEACH: THE 3RD PHANTOM

RATING: 4.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **TOM CREATE**
ESRB: **TEEN**

If you're already into the *Bleach* cartoons and comics, The 3rd Phantom has something going for it. It's an original story that builds on the background of the series, and it shines some interesting light on the origins of different characters. Unfortunately, to experience the story, you have to sit through the rest of the game. This is a very slow, very simple turn-based combat sim—it plays like a dumbed-down Super Robot Wars, and that series wasn't too bright to begin with. The battles are crammed with long, drawn-out animated cutscenes, which are great fun to watch the first time they play out and a tedious waste of space afterward. The DS is practically drowning in great strategy-RPGs, which means this one stays firmly in the for-fans-only bin. **—DAVID S.**

All in the Mind

PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE DIABOLICAL BOX

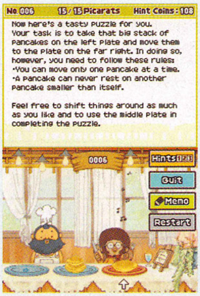
RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **LEVEL-5**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Last year's Professor Layton and the Curious Village was a fantastic game that excelled on multiple fronts. It provided a captivating mix of exploration, story, and puzzles; it introduced a great cast of charming characters; it offered stellar production values, including superb voice work and stunningly animated cut-scenes. And, fortunately, all of that holds true for the sequel, Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box. In terms of structure and content, the game is a lot like its predecessor, and in this case, more of the same is a good thing (at least for the most part).

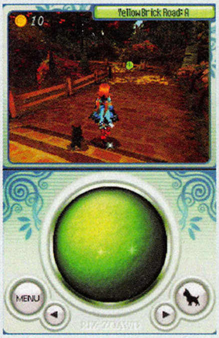
That's not to say everything is familiar territory. Although some of the puzzle concepts were explored in the previous Layton adventure, all of the brainteasers are brand-new, and they generally make great use of the touch screen. From moving-block puzzles to chess challenges to mazes to mathematical mindbenders, there's no lack of diversity or fun. They're probably slightly more difficult this time out, too (or I've just become that much more senile in the past year and a half), but thankfully there are plenty of hint coins around for anyone who needs pointers. The new minigames are also fresh additions that bring some much-appreciated variety.

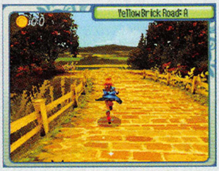
There is one aspect of the game, however, that suffers from being too similar to Layton's previous adventure, and that's the story. Though the mystery starts strong and remains intriguing, it ends up far too close to that of Curious Village, and a few plot threads aren't resolved quite as cleanly as I'd have liked. Even without that last layer of polish—or the groundbreaking newness of its predecessor—Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box is a great game that's well worth your time. **—CHRIS H.**

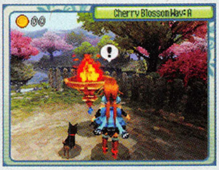


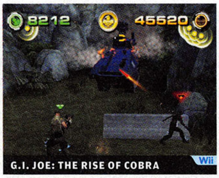
Now here's a tasty puzzle for you. Your task is to take that big stack of pancakes on the left plate and move them to the plate on the far right. In doing so, however, you need to follow these rules:
- You can move only one pancake at a time.
- A pancake can never rest on another pancake smaller than itself.

Feel free to shift things around as much as you like and to use the middle plate in completing the puzzle.

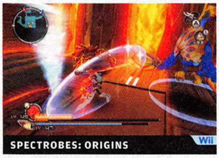




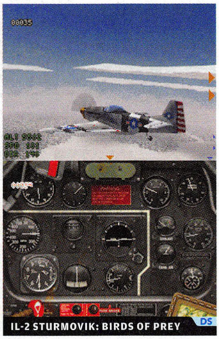




G.I. JOE: THE RISE OF COBRA



SPECTROBES: ORIGINS



IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

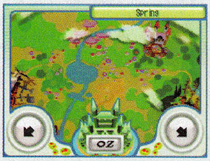
On the Road Again

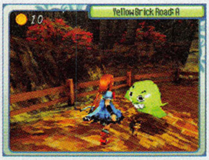
THE WIZARD OF OZ: BEYOND THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

RATING: **6.5**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **MEDIA.VISION**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

After a decade of servicing hardcore gamers with the Wild Arms series, Media.Vision is targeting a more casual audience with this original RPG based in the colorful world of The Wizard of Oz. The game is controlled entirely with the stylus, but instead of tapping in the direction you wish to move, you guide Dorothy by spinning a virtual trackball on the DS's lower screen. It's a bizarre control scheme, but oddly, it works; spinning the ball to have Dorothy zip past enemies like a car on a racetrack offers a welcome touch of speed that's rare in the genre. Battles are a bit more conventional, but the game makes things easier by offering a suggested action for each character; you can tap "OK" to execute its plan, or switch the actions and targets manually. Unfortunately, the AI's suggestions are often terrible, such as proposing that your healer attack while your fighter uses a healing item, and it takes an awful lot of stylus taps to switch it to a more sensible strategy. But despite a few hiccups, the developers have done a fine job of simplifying the genre with a straightforward quest and intuitive play mechanics. But in focusing so heavily on making the game accessible, they left out many of the things that make RPGs interesting. Wizard of Oz has only the thinnest of stories and its famous characters fall completely flat; each barely has more than a few lines of dialogue in the entire game. And the brief and overly linear quest offers several beautiful locales but no real feeling of discovery or exploration. Wizard of Oz is a cinch to pick up and play, but will be just as easily forgotten. **—CASEY L.**





G.I. JOE: THE RISE OF COBRA

RATING: **5.0**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **DOUBLE HELIX**
ESRB: **TEEN**

I really like what G.I. Joe is trying to accomplish from a conceptual standpoint; arcade-style co-op shooting is a lot of fun when it's done right. Unfortunately, what might have worked in a 45-minute arcade game doesn't work so well when it's spread out over hours and hours. The straightforward shooting gets really repetitive really fast (though it is better with a buddy), and despite occasional vehicle segments and a bombardment minigame, there's very little variety. Compounding the problems are dull level designs, unpolished visuals (the game seems to be going for a hyperrealistic look but doesn't quite get there), uneven difficulty, and glitchy action—enemies were able to shoot me through supposedly solid objects more times than I'd care to count. Joe fans will appreciate the diverse selection of playable characters, at least. **—CHRIS H.**

SPECTROBES: ORIGINS

RATING: **5.5**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **DISNEY INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **GENKI**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Spectrobes has garnered a considerable following on the DS, but the Wii debut of this Pokémon-inspired franchise falls flat. One of the main culprits is pacing. The adventure gets off to an excruciatingly slow start, and picks up only moderately after the first few hours. Plus, much of the impact from the game's core mechanic—collecting and training monsters—is watered down by the fact that battles involve so little strategy. The light puzzle elements are equally simplistic, and the story is very much by the numbers (though die-hard fans of the series may get more out of it than I did). Using various motion-controlled tools to excavate your Spectrobes is oddly compelling, but this is otherwise a pretty vanilla effort. **—STEVE T.**

IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

RATING: **4.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **505 GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **DIP INTERACTIVE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

This World War II aerial-combat sim lifts its name from a Russian fighter plane flown over eastern Europe during the conflict. It must've been a pretty awful plane, because it lends its moniker to a game in which it's virtually impossible to maneuver or engage in combat. Mix in some complicated sorties with constantly changing and poorly explained objectives, and you'll be hitting eject sooner rather than later. If you can endure enough trips behind enemy lines, at least you'll be rewarded with a nice variety of vintage planes to pilot. **—CHRIS SH.**

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[REVIEWS ARCHIVE]

Good Sport

There was only one real highlight among last issue's seven (yes, you read that right) reviews: Wii Sports Resort. This Wii MotionPlus accessory-powered sequel to the hit launch title Wii Sports earned an 8.5 after it impressed us with its depth and variety. Whenever we get some free time (which is pretty rare), Wii Sports Resort is our go-to game.

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.

Wii				
TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack	N/A	MTV Games	237	T
Animal Crossing: City Folk	8.0	Nintendo	236	E
The Bigs 2	6.0	2K Sports	244	E10+
Boogie SuperStar	7.0	Electronic Arts	235	E10+
Boom Blox Bash Party	8.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars—The Director's Cut	7.0	Ubisoft	241	T
Brothers in Arms: Double Time	7.0	Ubisoft	235	M
Call of Duty: World at War	8.0	Activision	237	M
Castlevania Judgment	7.0	Konami	236	T
Cate West: The Vanishing Files	N/A	Destineer	240	E10+
Celebrity Sports Showdown	4.5	EA Sports	235	E
The Conduit	8.0	Sega	243	T
Cooking Mama World Kitchen	6.5	Majesco	236	E
Crash: Mind over Mutant	N/A	Activision	235	E10+
Dead Rising: Chop Till You Drop	N/A	Capcom	240	M
Deadly Creatures	7.5	THQ	239	T
Destiny of Zorro	2.5	505	243	E10+
Dokapon Kingdom	8.5	Atlus	235	E10+
Don King Boxing	5.5	2K Sports	241	T
Excitebots: Trick Racing	8.0	Nintendo	241	E
FaceBreaker K.O. Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	235	T
FIFA Soccer 09 All-Play	7.5	Electronic Arts	235	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	6.0	Square Enix	240	E10+
Fishing Master: World Tour	7.5	Hudson	238	E
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	7.5	Atari	243	E10+
Grand Slam Tennis	7.5	Electronic Arts	243	E
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core Plus	7.5	Aksys	241	T
Guitar Hero Metallica	N/A	Activision	240	T
Guitar Hero Smash Hits	N/A	Activision	243	T
Guitar Hero World Tour	8.5	Activision	236	T
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	5.5	Electronic Arts	244	E10+
Help Wanted	4.5	Hudson	242	E10+
The House of the Dead: Overkill	8.0	Sega	239	M
Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings	7.5	LucasArts	243	T
The King of Fighters: The Orochi Saga	8.0	SNK Playmore	235	T
Klonoa	9.0	Namco Bandai	241	E10+
Kung Fu Panda: Legendary Warriors	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	7.0	Warner Bros.	235	E10+
Let's Tap	7.0	Sega	243	E
Little King's Story	9.0	XSEED	244	T
Lost in Blue: Shipwrecked	6.5	Konami	235	E10+
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
Madden NFL 10	8.0	Electronic Arts	245	E
MadWorld	9.0	Sega	240	M
Major League Baseball 2K9	6.0	2K Sports	240	E
Major Minor's Majestic March	6.0	Majesco	241	E
Marble Saga: Kororinpa	7.5	Hudson	240	E
Metroid Prime Trilogy	N/A	Nintendo	245	T
Monster Lab	6.5	Eidos	236	E10+
MotoGP	4.0	Capcom	240	E
The Munchables	7.0	Namco Bandai	243	E
Mushroom Men: The Spore Wars	8.0	Gamecock	236	E10+
MySims Kingdom	7.5	Electronic Arts	235	E
MySims Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
MySims Racing	N/A	Electronic Arts	243	E
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution 2	8.0	Tomy	235	T
NASCAR Kart Racing	6.0	EA Sports	238	E
Need for Speed Undercover	6.5	Electronic Arts	236	T
Neighborhood Games	N/A	THQ	238	E
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	N/A	Capcom	236	E
New Play Control! Donkey Kong Jungle Beat	N/A	Nintendo	242	E10+
New Play Control! Mario Power Tennis	N/A	Nintendo	239	E
New Play Control! Pikmin	N/A	Nintendo	239	E
Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian: The Video Game	N/A	Majesco	242	E10+
Onechanbara: Bikini Zombie Slayers	6.5	D3Publisher	240	M
Overlord: Dark Legend	7.0	Codemasters	244	T
Phantom Brave: We Meet Again	8.0	NIS America	243	T
Pop Star Guitar	N/A	XS Games	236	T
Pro Evolution Soccer 2009	N/A	Konami	240	E
Punch-Out!!	8.5	Nintendo	242	E10+
Quantum of Solace	5.0	Activision	237	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party	5.5	Ubisoft	236	E10+
Ready 2 Rumble Revolution	5.0	Atari	240	T
Reel Fishing: Angler's Dream	N/A	Natsume	243	E
Resident Evil Archives	N/A	Capcom	244	M
Rock Band 2	9.0	MTV Games	237	T
Rock Band Track Pack Volume 2	N/A	MTV Games	237	T
Rock Revolution	4.5	Konami	235	T
Rubik's World	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Rune Factory Frontier	7.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	7.0	Tecmo	236	T
Samurai Shodown Anthology	N/A	SNK Playmore	242	T
Shaun White Snowboarding: Road Trip	7.0	Ubisoft	236	E10+
SimAnimals	N/A	Electronic Arts	238	E
Skate It	6.0	Electronic Arts	237	E
Sonic and the Black Knight	8.0	Sega	239	E10+
Sonic Unleashed	8.0	Sega	236	E10+
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	6.5	Activision	236	T
SPRay	3.0	Tecmo	235	E10+
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Lightsaber Duels	4.0	LucasArts	236	T
Tales of Symphonia: Dawn of the New World	8.0	Namco Bandai	236	T
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	7.0	Ubisoft	238	M
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	9.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
TNA Impact!	5.0	Midway	235	T
Tomb Raider Underworld	7.0	Eidos	236	T
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	5.5	Activision	245	T
Ultimate Band	6.0	Disney	235	E
Ultimate Shooting Collection	N/A	UFO	237	E
Up	6.5	THQ	242	E
Virtua Tennis 2009	7.0	Sega	244	E
We Cheer	6.0	Namco Bandai	235	E10+
We Ski and Snowboard	6.5	Namco Bandai	239	E

REVIEWER NOTES

MADDEN NFL 10

In last month's review for Madden NFL 10, one of my main critiques was the lack of a Franchise mode. After the issue went to print, we learned that Franchise mode actually *is* in the game, but you have to unlock it with a secret code. Though we seriously question EA's decision to hide such a major feature, its inclusion increases our rating to an 8.0. We apologize for the error. **—STEVE T.**

KNIGHTS IN THE NIGHTMARE

Knights in the Nightmare is certainly unique, but the hefty time investment required just to learn the basics was a bit too much for me. **—TOM H.**

THE CONDUIT

Purely as a single-player game, The Conduit is a pretty uneven experience. On the one hand, the graphics and controls are fantastic—this is how first-person shooters on Wii should look and play. On the other hand, the level design, the story, and the presentation are lackluster. Fortunately, the great multiplayer helps offset these issues; in fact, The Conduit is probably my favorite online multiplayer game right now. **—JUSTIN C.**

Wii Music	N/A	Nintendo	235	E
Wii Sports Resort	8.5	Nintendo	245	E
WordJong Party	N/A	Destineer	238	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	8.0	THQ	236	T
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	5.0	Activision	243	T
NINTENDO DS				
Age of Empires: Mythologies	7.0	THQ	236	E10+
Ant Nation	2.0	Konami	245	E
Avalon Code	8.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
AWAY: Shuffle Dungeon	7.0	Majesco	235	E10+
Big Bang Mini	8.5	SouthPeak	237	E
Black Sigil: Blade of the Exiled	5.0	Graffiti	242	E
Blue Dragon Plus	8.0	Ignition	239	E
Boing! Docomodake DS	7.0	Ignition	239	E
Brain Quest Grades 3 & 4	N/A	Electronic Arts	235	E
Brain Quest Grades 5 & 6	N/A	Electronic Arts	235	E
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templar—The Director's Cut	N/A	Ubisoft	240	T
Call of Duty: World at War	N/A	Activision	236	T
Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia	8.0	Konami	235	T
The Chase: Felix Meets Felicity	5.0	Atari	238	E
Chrono Trigger	9.0	Square Enix	236	E10+
C.O.R.E.	5.5	Graffiti	242	M
Crash: Mind over Mutant	N/A	Activision	235	E
The Dark Spire	5.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Dawn of Discovery	8.5	Ubisoft	244	E
Dokapon Journey	4.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Don King Boxing	N/A	2K Sports	240	T
Dragon Ball: Origins	7.0	Atari	235	E
Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride	8.5	Square Enix	239	E
Elebits: The Adventures of Kai and Zero	7.0	Konami	237	E
Emergency! Disaster Rescue Squad	N/A	Destineer	240	E10+
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	6.5	Square Enix	240	E10+
Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon	8.5	Nintendo	239	E10+
Flower, Sun, and Rain	6.0	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	T
Gardening Mama	8.0	Majesco	240	E
Gauntlet	7.5	Eidos	236	T
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	N/A	Atari	243	E
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	5.0	Electronic Arts	245	E10+
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	9.0	Rockstar	241	M
Guitar Hero On Tour: Decades	7.0	Activision	237	E10+
Guitar Hero On Tour: Modern Hits	7.0	Activision	244	E10+
Harvest Moon: Frantic Farming	8.0	Natsume	243	E
Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure	8.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings	N/A	LucasArts	243	T
Jake Hunter Detective Story: Memories of the Past	6.0	Aksys	242	T
Knights in the Nightmare	8.0	Atlus	243	T
Kung Fu Panda: Legendary Warriors	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
Legacy of Ys: Books I & II	7.5	Atlus	238	T
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	N/A	Activision	236	E
The Legendary Starfy	7.0	Nintendo	243	E
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	7.5	Warner Bros.	235	E10+
LEGO Battles	5.0	Warner Bros.	243	E
Little Red Riding Hood's Zombie BBQ	5.0	Destineer	235	T
The Lord of the Rings: Conquest	5.0	Electronic Arts	238	E10+
Luminous Arc 2	7.0	Atlus	236	T
Lux-Pain	4.0	Ignition	240	T
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa	N/A	Activision	236	E
Magician's Quest: Mysterious Times	7.5	Konami	242	E10+
Master of the Monster Lair	6.5	Atlus	235	E10+
Mega Man Star Force 3: Red Joker/Black Ace	6.0	Capcom	244	E
Metal Slug 7	7.5	Ignition	236	T
Miami Law	3.0	Hudson	243	T
Monster Lab	8.0	Eidos	236	E10+
Moon	7.5	Mastiff	236	T
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi	5.0	Gamecock	236	E
My DoItAll	N/A	Tomy	239	E
My World, My Way	7.0	Atlus	239	E
MySims Party	N/A	Electronic Arts	240	E
MySims Racing	N/A	Electronic Arts	243	E
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Council 4	5.0	Tomy	243	E10+
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	6.0	Capcom	236	E
Ninjatown	8.0	SouthPeak	235	E
Overlord Minions	7.0	Codemasters	244	E10+
Peggle Dual Shot	8.5	PopCap	240	E
Personal Trainer: Cooking	N/A	Nintendo	237	E
Personal Trainer: Math	N/A	Nintendo	239	E
Personal Trainer: Walking	N/A	Nintendo	243	E
Pokémon Platinum Version	9.0	Nintendo	241	E
Pokémon Ranger: Shadows of Almia	8.0	Nintendo	236	E
Prince of Persia: The Fallen King	7.0	Ubisoft	237	E
Princess on Ice	N/A	Aksys	235	E
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	8.0	D3Publisher	240	E10+
Quantum of Solace	6.0	Activision	237	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party	N/A	Ubisoft	236	E10+
Retro Game Challenge	8.0	XSEED	237	RP
Rhythm Heaven	9.0	Nintendo	241	E
Robocalypse	7.5	Tecmo	235	E10+
Rock Revolution	5.0	Konami	235	E10+
Rockin' Pretty	N/A	Aksys	244	E
Roogoo Attack	4.0	SouthPeak	243	E
Rubik's World	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Rune Factory 2: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	7.0	Natsume	237	E
Shaun the Sheep	4.0	D3Publisher	235	E
Shaun White Snowboarding	N/A	Ubisoft	236	E
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Summoner	8.0	Atlus	244	T
SimAnimals	N/A	Electronic Arts	238	E
Skate It	5.5	Electronic Arts	237	E
Space Bust-A-Move	7.0	Taito	245	E
Spectrobes: Beyond the Portals	8.0	Disney	235	E10+
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	N/A	Activision	235	E10+
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Jedi Alliance	6.0	LucasArts	236	E
Steal Princess	6.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Suikoden: Tierkreis	7.0	Konami	240	E10+
Super Robot Taisen OG Saga: Endless Frontier	7.0	Atlus	241	T
Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff	6.0	Tecmo	235	E
Theresia	N/A	Aksys	235	M
Tokyo Beat Down	6.0	Atlus	240	T
Tom Clancy's EndWar	N/A	Ubisoft	236	T
Tomb Raider Underworld	N/A	Eidos	236	T
Tony Hawk's Motion	4.0	Activision	237	E
Touch Mechanic	5.0	Aspyr	241	E
TrackMania DS	7.0	Atlus	240	E
Transformers Animated: The Game	7.0	Activision	235	E
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	7.0	Activision	245	E10+
Treasure World	N/A	Aspyr	244	E
Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume	9.0	Square Enix	240	T
What's Cooking? Jamie Oliver	N/A	Atari	235	E
World Championship Games	N/A	The Game Factory	240	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	4.0	THQ	236	T
Zenses: Oceans	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Zenses: Rainforest	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Zubo	6.5	Electronic Arts	240	E10+

Wii SPORTS RESORT

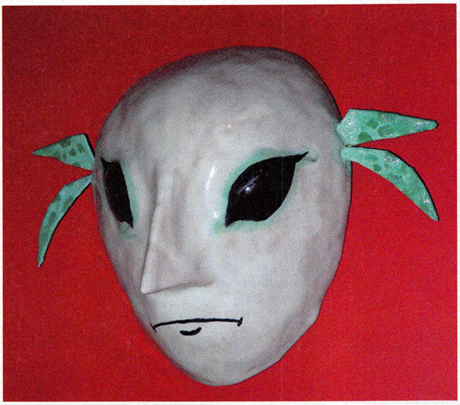
Even after playing the game a lot for my review last issue, Wii Sports Resort continues to monopolize my time at home. I've found that the game's multi-event, quick-play format lends itself well to short, daily play sessions after work. I tend to do better at most events when I stand up and move around, which has resulted in the most regular exercise this couch potato has gotten in quite awhile. —CHRIS SL.

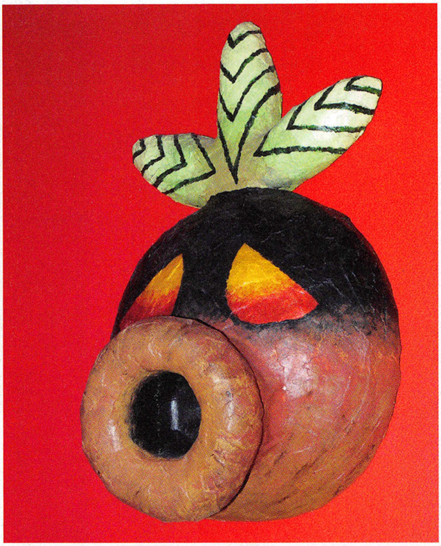
TRANSFORMERS: REVENGE OF THE FALLEN (Wii)

While the game itself isn't all that great, the voice acting (particularly for Soundwave, Optimus Prime, and Megatron) and the unlockable G1 cartoon episodes are pretty cool. —JUSTIN C.

HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE (Wii)

A brisker pace and a higher action quotient make Half-Blood Prince a slight improvement over the previous Potter Wii title, but it still feels like there's not enough to do. A magic school should have a lot more going on than four activities. Given that two years have passed since the last game came out, I expected a lot more. —CHRIS H.





FANDOM

(Art) Class Act

Clay and papier-mâché bring Link's masks to life.

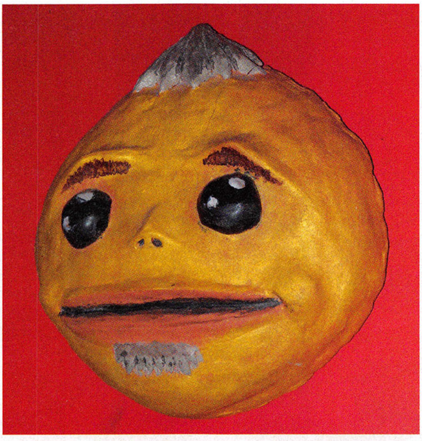
The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask launched nine years ago, but it's still inspiring young artists to re-create some of its most iconic imagery. These three masks come to us from 19-year-old Stephen Plant, a visual-arts student from Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada. Plant created all three in art class during his final two years of high school, using the opportunity (and free materials) to pay homage to the classic Nintendo 64 game.

"I wanted each mask to look and feel just as unique as each of Link's transformations in Majora's Mask," explains Plant. "For instance, Deku Link was much lighter than Link's other forms, so I made the Deku mask out of papier-mâché, which made it quite light."

For the Zora and Goron masks, Plant instead opted to use clay, glazing the Zora mask to give it a "streamlined aquatic feel" while leaving the Goron mask unglazed to maintain its "rough earthy feel," he says. He points to the well-crafted worlds of the Zelda franchise as an inspiration for the artwork, and says he loves the idea of taking something from a fictional universe and making it into tangible artwork. None of the masks have eye holes, but that doesn't stop Plant from occasionally putting one on. "It is fun to put the Deku mask on your face and cry out like Link does in the game," he says. "That never gets old."

Plant typically works with 2-D drawings or computer animation, and has had previous artwork featured in Volumes 208 and 219 of Nintendo Power (under the alias Oozo the Clown). In addition to debuting an online Flash cartoon in the near future, he hopes to continue the process of re-creating the masks from the game, including the titular Majora's Mask, the Fierce Deity Mask, and his personal favorite, the Blast Mask.

—ANDREW H.



EVENT

THE LEGENDARY STARFY

Starfy Takes Manhattan

Having already made a big splash in Japan on Game Boy Advance, plucky sea creature Starfy has waded into the North American market with The Legendary Starfy, his Nintendo DS debut. To mark the occasion, Nintendo unveiled the character's costumed counterpart at an event in midtown Manhattan's Nintendo World store on July 11th. Though the game character is able to speed through troubled waters with the agility of an eel, the mascot proved to be just a tad more stationary. The costume's stubby legs and ample padding made it tricky for the big guy to do more than waddle, wiggle, and pose for pictures. The hundreds of fans in attendance didn't seem to mind, though. They waited in long lines for Starfy face-painting, a photo op, and a chance to take Nintendo's rising star for a spin in a DS gaming session. I left the event with a star-shaped balloon and an appreciation for the dedication it would take to don an arctic-ready star suit on a muggy July afternoon. —GEORGE S.

THE LEGENDARY STARFY

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

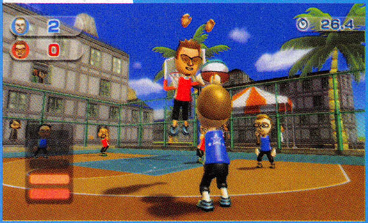
Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!

WRITE YOUR OWN CAPTION

Screen Test

There's something cool about Wolverine. Maybe it's the claws. Maybe it's the healing factor. Or maybe it's the Canadianness. Whatever the reason, you readers came up with some clever X-Men Origins: Wolverine for Wii captions (see below). This month, we're hitting the beach. If you want to join us, send a caption to **screentest@nintendopower.com**.

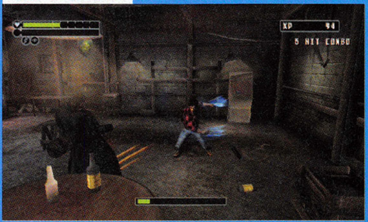
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



Look into the basketball.... You're feeling sleepy...very sleepy....

HERE'S OUR CAPTION. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 244'S SHOT



"Unknown to many, Hugh Jackman pressed hard to have his roots as a musical star acknowledged by adding musical numbers to X-Men Origins: Wolverine. " —KYLE S.

"Sorry, Wolverine, Shadow Claw is just a Pokémon move." —BURGERQUEEN

"The five-piece combo meal now includes a can of whup, but only for a limited time!" —WILL

"Do the Mario! Swing your arms from side to side!" —DOC J.

"No matter how hard he tried, Wolverine still couldn't cast Rasengan." —CLONE 228

NEXT MONTH

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Last issue's Next Month tease for more No More Heroes 2 coverage fell through (sorry about that), but we're 99.99% sure that Leon and co. will drop by next month to blow up your world with Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles. And to make up for NMH2, we'll reveal a major DSiWare title that should make many of you very, very happy.

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